

George Mitchell School

Farmer Road, London, E10 5DN

Inspection dates

14–15 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is improving quickly and securely. The headteacher, senior leadership team and members of the governing body are ambitious for the school. They have devoted their energy to driving successful improvements to teaching and pupils' outcomes across the school.
- Leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching in the primary and secondary phases. Teaching, learning and assessment is good across the school because leaders identify where teaching needs to improve and provide training and coaching that secures swift improvements.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team have successfully raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers plan interesting work that captures pupils' interest and motivates them to work hard.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have made sure that all three age phases work closely together. This helps pupils throughout the school to benefit from common approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils' outcomes are good. Pupils make good progress in the primary and secondary phases. Leaders measure pupils' achievement regularly. They provide individualised support for selected pupils that helps to make sure all pupils achieve well.
- Pupils attend school regularly and have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils are polite and well mannered. In the primary and secondary phases, pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The early years provision is good. Over recent time, children's achievement at the end of the Reception Year has improved year on year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although standards are rising, they are broadly average overall because teaching is good and not outstanding.
- Teachers do not always follow the school's marking policy consistently enough to make sure pupils know how to improve their work.
- Pupils are not consistently clear about their individual academic targets because leaders have not made sure that pupils understand the school's new assessment measures effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by continuing to improve teaching.
- Ensure that pupils know how to improve their work by:
 - making sure that teachers follow the school's marking policy consistently
 - accelerating pupils' understanding of the school's new assessment measures.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since his appointment, the headteacher has worked with determination to establish close collaborative work across the school's three age phases. Through the careful appointment of key members of staff, the headteacher and members of the governing body have strengthened the senior and middle leadership teams. In particular, they have made sure that leaders are fully accountable for improving teaching and pupils' outcomes within their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders across all phases make regular checks on the quality of teaching and use the information to prioritise further training for staff. Leaders use performance management effectively to improve teaching and tackle any underperformance. Well-organised coaching and additional targeted support for individual members of staff has secured better teaching than previously throughout the school.
- Together with senior leaders and members of the governing body, the headteacher has made sure that the whole school community has higher expectations of pupils' academic outcomes and behaviour. He has raised the aspirations of staff. The oldest pupils are ambitious for themselves and are keen to do well. They appreciate improvements that the headteacher has introduced, including to careers advice and guidance and to standards of behaviour. They say teachers set homework frequently and challenge them to produce their best work.
- Leaders have tackled children's previously low outcomes in the early years provision. They have secured improvements to the early years provision that have successfully raised children's achievement by the end of the Reception Year.
- Leaders check the quality of alternative provision carefully. They monitor pupils' attendance rates and visit alternative providers regularly to measure the progress that pupils make.
- Pupils build up their skills well as a result of the broad and balanced curriculum that leaders have introduced in the primary and secondary phases. In the primary phase, pupils develop confidence in reading, writing and mathematics through daily sessions. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learn French, taught by teachers from the secondary phase. Outings and visits to a wide variety of local places of interest are well selected to deepen pupils' understanding. Leaders have introduced a residential visit for pupils in Year 6 as well as popular extra-curricular clubs, including cooking, flute and violin lessons, and dodge ball. In the secondary phase, leaders have increased the vocational courses that pupils can choose to help prepare them well for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders have taken steps to introduce new approaches to measuring pupils' progress and attainment in line with nationally introduced changes to the curriculum. However, leaders have not made sure that pupils understand the school's new assessment measures quickly enough so that pupils know their personal targets and how to attain them.
- The pupil premium funding is used carefully to ensure equality of opportunity for disadvantaged pupils. The funding is used in a very wide variety of ways that show leaders' and governors' determination to tackle discrimination.
- Through a wide range of curriculum activities, the school makes sure that pupils across the age groups develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values. Discussions in assemblies, activity days, visitors to the school and workshops help pupils to understand the rule of law, the value of democracy and the importance of tolerance and respect for the cultures and faiths of others. Visits to local places of worship and celebrations of festivals foster pupils' understanding of other cultures.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils are encouraged to take on roles of responsibility, for example as members of the primary and secondary student governing body. Older pupils mentor the younger ones and take on leadership of activities as breaktime play leaders.
- The PE and sports premium for primary schools is used effectively to encourage high participation rates and promote pupils' positive attitudes to keeping fit and healthy. Pupils benefit from sessions with specialist sports teachers from the secondary phase.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are highly motivated and demonstrably committed to improving the school. They work closely with the headteacher and senior leadership team and are ambitious for the school to continue to improve swiftly. They are well informed about the school's work. They regularly check the progress that the school makes against demanding targets and action plans. Governors

bring considerable expertise to their roles. They attend additional training to help them to support and challenge the school's leaders further.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems and policies are appropriate. Staff know what procedures they must follow should any concerns arise. Staff are well trained and receive regular additional instruction that keeps them well informed about the most recent advice and guidance. This includes specific training for all staff, including members of the governing body, on recognising possible risks from radicalisation and extremism and possible signs that a pupil may be at risk of female genital mutilation. Weekly news letters for parents in each of the phases help to keep them well informed about the school's work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Relationships between teaching staff and pupils are positive and encouraging. Across the school, pupils are keen to learn and listen attentively because teaching is engaging and captures pupils' interest. Social skills are fostered well because pupils are encouraged to work together and share their ideas. In Year 10, pupils working together in a business lesson supported each other by reflecting on their understanding and sharing their knowledge. Pupils concentrated hard and were confident to articulate their ideas because they were keen to develop their own thinking and to support one another.
- Teachers use assessment information to plan work that is typically demanding for pupils' abilities. The most-able pupils deepen their understanding through the difficult or demanding tasks teachers set. In a phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they represent) session in the Nursery class, a group of most-able children were observed listening very carefully to the teacher and thinking hard to identify the letters and sounds they could hear at the start of words.
- Across the school, additional adults make a valuable contribution to pupils' achievement, particularly to the learning and progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils speaking English as an additional language, who are at the early stages of learning English, benefit from additional sessions that help them to develop their knowledge of spoken and written English swiftly.
- Leadership of teaching is effective in securing consistent approaches across classes. For example, in the primary phase, teachers make clear what pupils will be learning and encourage them to check for themselves how successful they have been. Teachers explain clearly to pupils how to complete activities so that pupils understand new learning quickly. In a mathematics lesson in Year 3 for instance, pupils solved challenging problems by carefully applying the number bond skills the teacher had shown them. They readily checked their answers were correct by following the steps modelled by the teacher.
- The school's policy on giving feedback to pupils about their work is not as consistently followed. When teachers do not make precisely clear what pupils need to do to improve, or when pupils do not adopt their advice and suggestions, the impact of feedback is diminished.
- Activities carefully matched to their interests help children in the early years provision to learn well. Activities in the inside and outdoor areas are well planned to help children build on what they know and can do already. In the early years provision, children learn quickly through discussions with adults. Expectations are high and help to raise children's outcomes. In a Reception class, all children were observed confidently participating in a singing activity to practise counting up to 100.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good, including for pupils who attend alternative provision. Pupils are enthusiastic to learn. Through their positive approach to work, pupils demonstrate an awareness of how to be successful learners. Occasionally, pupils are not careful to present their written work neatly.
- Opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life of the school promotes pupils' self-confidence and pride in their school. For example, children in Reception classes eagerly help put resources away during 'tidy-up time'. Pupils in the secondary phase contribute to the selection of new members of staff by taking part in the interviewing process. Pupils who join the school partway through their primary or secondary education are made to feel welcome and settle quickly because pupils are friendly and welcoming.
- Pupils in primary and secondary phases know what constitutes bullying, and what does not. Pupils say

that instances of bullying are rare, as school records show. Pupils in primary and secondary phases are confident that staff take swift and effective action to deal with any problems that occur. Pupils say that staff are highly visible around the school and this helps them to feel safe and secure. Across the school, discussions in assemblies, visitors to the school and workshops on a wide range of topics, including radicalisation, gang culture and online safety, help pupils develop a strong awareness of what actions they can take in order to keep themselves safe from harm.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils throughout the school is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are typically polite and well-mannered. During lesson change times, pupils' behaviour is orderly and sensible. Pupils show respect for the school's resources. Sometimes, pupils' behaviour is less settled. On these occasions, pupils respond quickly to reminders from staff about the behaviour that is expected. The school site is graffiti- and litter-free.
- Older pupils appreciate the greater consistency with which staff follow the school's behaviour policy compared with at the time of the previous inspection. Sanctions for any misbehaviour are clear and followed through reliably.
- Pupils attend school regularly and attendance rates are above national averages.
- Leaders check that pupils at alternative provision behave well. They make sure that these pupils are encouraged to benefit from courses tailored to their personal interests and needs. Pupils at alternative provision attend regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- By securing improvements to the quality of teaching, leaders have successfully driven up rates of pupils' progress throughout the school. The school's assessment information shows that all groups of pupils currently on roll at the school generally make good progress from their starting points in English, reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2015, provisional results in national assessments suggest that pupils in Year 11, including disadvantaged pupils, those speaking English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the most able made strong progress from their starting points in English, mathematics, science, modern languages and humanities.
- Provisional assessment information suggests pupils in Year 6 in 2015, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils speaking English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also made swift progress from their starting points, particularly in writing and mathematics. A greater proportion of most-able pupils at the school made rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics, compared with most-able pupils nationally.
- Leaders have been equally successful in securing marked improvements to outcomes for children in the early years provision so they are better prepared for the start of Year 1. Formerly low attainment at the end of the Reception Year has risen each year since the previous inspection. In 2015, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was slightly above the national average.
- Standards are rising overall. Attainment in assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2015 were the highest since the previous inspection and were close to national averages. Disadvantaged pupils reached similar standards in reading, writing and mathematics, compared to the others in the school. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was similar to the national average. Attainment at the end of Year 11 in 2015 was broadly average in terms of five A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders are rightly determined to raise attainment further in all key stages so that pupils are better prepared when they move on to the next phase of their education.

Early years provision

is good

- Good leadership has improved teaching in the early years. Leaders have tackled weaker teaching and secured better outcomes. The quality of teaching is good. Children achieve well from their starting points.
- Since the beginning of this academic year, the Reception classes share the same site as the Nursery class.

As a result, Nursery and Reception classes work more closely and consistently together than previously.

- Children work and play happily together in the Nursery and Reception classes. Adults plan a variety of interesting activities that capture children's interest. Children in the Nursery enjoyed building their physical confidence in the outdoor area by climbing onto and jumping off climbing apparatus.
- Adults prioritise developing children's personal and social development and their speaking skills. In discussions, adults extend children's understanding and help them to expand their vocabulary and knowledge of new words.

School details

Unique reference number	137907
Local authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10001964

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	929
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Milligan
Headteacher	Saeed Hussain
Telephone number	020 85396198
Website	www.georgemitchellschool.co.uk
Email address	kathleen.smith@georgemitchell.waltham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 October 2013

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized all-through school. Early years provision, primary and secondary phases occupy separate sites. Children attend the Nursery part-time, either in the morning or the afternoon. Children in the Reception class attend full-time.
- More pupils than nationally speak English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion is known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school uses two alternative providers for a very few selected secondary-age pupils. These are: Waltham Forest College and Conel College.
- The primary and secondary phases meet the current government floor standards.
- The school organises and manages breakfast provision for pupils in the primary phase.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 61 teaching sessions across a wide range of subject areas in all key stages. A large majority of visits to lessons were conducted together with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in lessons and around the school, and looked at work in pupils' books. They also met with groups of pupils from Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, and listened to primary-phase pupils reading. Inspectors met with a representative from the local authority and held a meeting with three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- They looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including assessment information, minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's action plans and self-evaluation reports. The school's records relating to safeguarding were also checked.
- There were 14 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke informally with parents during the inspection. The inspection took account of 41 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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