

# The Minerva Academy

157 Edgware Road, London W2 2HR

**Inspection dates** 19–20 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.

- Leaders have created a calm, happy and well-organised environment in which pupils thrive.
- Engagement between centrally employed REAch2 staff and school leaders ensures an effective balance of challenge and support.
- The headteacher's determination for each pupil to achieve their potential is supported practically by her frequent visits to classrooms to check that they are being taught well.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Proportions of pupils achieving the expected outcomes at the end of Reception and Key Stage 1 are above, or similar to, those seen nationally.
- Training for teachers is well-organised, focusing on the most important aspects of their work. Arrangements to monitor pupils' progress, and the impact of teaching, are thorough.
- Children in Reception make a good start to their school lives. They gain the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to successfully tackle their learning in Year 1.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They enjoy coming to school, feel safe and embrace the varied experiences offered through the school's curriculum.
- Close and effective attention is given to the needs of the very high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Effective governance at local and trust levels results in governors having a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The support that pupils receive from adults other than their teacher is variable. Not all support provided by teaching assistants provides effective support for pupils' learning.
- Occasionally, the most-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently. They continue to work at the same level when they are ready to deepen or extend their learning.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - the quality of support for pupils' learning offered by teaching assistants is consistently high
  - teachers use their observations of what pupils understand, know and can do, to continually challenge the most-able pupils to deepen or extend their understanding.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher began working at the school in September 2015. She has made a positive impression on staff and parents in the short time she has been in post. Parents say she has been proactive in increasing parental involvement in the school community. Staff morale is high and all agree that they are proud to work at the school.
- As a member of the REAch2 multi-academy trust, the school's culture and vision are closely aligned with the trust's aim of 'raising educational achievement for children'. The school works closely with staff from the trust, achieving an effective balance between the school's independence, and trust leaders' direction.
- Senior leaders visit classrooms frequently to ensure that they are well informed about the quality of teaching. Regular meetings between senior leaders and teachers are used effectively to review each pupil's progress, identifying appropriate additional support as necessary. Leaders, rightly, pay close attention to the impact of teachers' practice on pupils' learning by noting the progress evident in their workbooks.
- Teachers new to the school and those in the early stages of their careers undertake a well-planned and tailored package of training. Visits to other schools in the trust, those graded outstanding by Ofsted, supplement teachers' training, giving them access to proven effective practice. This approach reduces the time it takes teachers to become established and ensures a consistent approach to key areas of the school's work.
- A high proportion of pupils leave, or are admitted to, the school at times other than the start of the school year. For example, approximately half of the number of pupils currently on roll have either left or joined the school since September 2015. The school's focus on the circumstances and needs of individual pupils results in new arrivals being inducted quickly and effectively. It closely reflects the principle of inclusion, one of seven identified by the trust as making its academies unique.
- The school's curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and is designed to ensure that pupils benefit from the resources London has to offer. The school promotes the notion that 'London is our classroom'. Themed topics form the basis for each half-term's work in each subject. Regular visits to museums and places of interest inspire pupils and engage them in what they subsequently learn in the classroom. A range of before- and after-school clubs, including drama, cooking and dance, support pupils' social and academic development well.
- Pupil premium funding is spent wisely. An element of the funding is used to ensure that eligible pupils are fully included in the life of the school; they access free music lessons, school uniform and school trips. The vast majority of the funding is used well to ensure that any pupils who appear to be underachieving are identified quickly and supported to make rapid progress.
- In addition to the purchase of equipment, the physical education and sport premium is used effectively to provide a combination of activities, including swimming for Year 1 pupils. Physical education lessons are led by a specialist teacher, alongside whom teachers work to develop their own skills and knowledge.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The extremely low frequency of poor behaviour is indicative of pupils' high levels of social and moral awareness. Their ability to reflect on topical global issues such as climate change, combined with the interest they show in learning about the lives of others, demonstrates pupils' strong spiritual development. Numerous opportunities to visit museums and places of interest are highly effective in developing pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
- The REAch2 trust provides highly effective support for the school. It is responsive to changes of staffing, providing tailored training so that any impact on pupils is minimised. Associate school leaders, staff employed centrally by the trust, are deployed effectively to ensure that recently appointed staff receive the support and training that they need.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance comprises boards at local, regional and national levels. Accountability lies with the national board, with some aspects of governance being delegated to regional and local boards. The local board provides detailed scrutiny, challenge and support to school leaders. It monitors the school's performance closely.
  - At the time the school joined the trust, a transition board, chaired by a trust director, was established to ensure that robust procedures were put in place. This board was replaced by a local governing body

in September 2015.

- Governors are clear about their roles and about the relationship between the different governing boards. They have a good understanding of their role in challenging and supporting leaders.
- Governors receive information about pupils' performance, including that about different groups of pupils. Governors know about the quality of teaching in the school and appreciate the importance of pupils receiving consistently good teaching.
- Despite school finances being stretched at the time that the school joined the trust, measures have been taken to ensure that spending no longer exceeds income.
- Trust leaders ensure that matters not directly related to teaching and learning are handled by those with the appropriate expertise. For example, matters relating to the construction of the new school building are managed by the trust's architects. This leaves school leaders to concentrate on the core elements of their role.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are well-trained and have a good understanding of the systems in place to refer any concerns they may have. They keep an eye out for any signs of abuse or potential radicalisation.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**is good**

- Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is effective because it is well matched to their needs. Teaching assistants have the right skills to engage with pupils effectively, focusing closely on supporting their learning.
- All of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, agree that their children make good progress at the school.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons, and sequences of lessons, well. For example, prior to introducing the notion of balanced equations, the teacher ensured that pupils had mastered the concept of equivalence. He also checked that pupils were proficient in applying the calculation strategies that they would need to apply later in the lesson.
- A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Some are at the very earliest stages of learning the language. Staff have a good understanding of the importance of ensuring that these pupils practise their spoken English skills regularly. Opportunities are created throughout the day, during lessons and at less formal times, to engage pupils in conversation, modelling correct pronunciation and grammar while introducing new vocabulary.
- The teaching of phonics is tailored according to pupils' needs. Pupils learn alongside those from other year groups with a similar level of understanding. This helps to ensure that teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs. Pupils are assessed regularly and groups adjusted to take account of pupils' progress.
- The support provided by additional adults is variable in quality. Where practice is strongest, adults have excellent subject knowledge, are able to engage pupils and use practical resources skilfully. In some cases, however, adults do not have a sufficiently thorough understanding of the subject, leading to pupils remaining confused and their progress being limited.
- On occasions, more-able pupils complete too much work of a similar level before being given further challenge. For example, in mathematics, these pupils sometimes correctly answer numerous calculations of a similar nature when they have already grasped the concept being taught. This prevents them deepening or extending their knowledge and understanding.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**is good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Parents and staff agree that pupils feel safe at school. Pupils are able to explain the arrangements that are in place to keep them safe when they go on trips. They understand that the participation of parent helpers enables them to be organised into smaller groups and that this leads to closer supervision. Older pupils are aware that they should give careful consideration to posting personal information online.
- Pupils enjoy lunchtimes, making healthy choices from the selection available. They hold conversations with each other, sharing the bread placed centrally on the tables politely and without fuss.

- Pupils take care of their belongings, and those of others. They demonstrate great awareness of their own capabilities and those of their peers. Even the youngest pupils carry their lunch plates without incident or spillage.
- Older pupils understand the relevance of what they are learning. They have a reflective approach to their education. They are able to explain how they are likely to build on what they are currently learning as they move into secondary education and employment. For example, one child explained that her interest in bugs had motivated her to become a scientist.
- Pupils are appreciative of the numerous trips they make from school to places of interest. They enjoyed discussing issues relating to climate change with the inspector following a recent class visit to the natural history museum.
- Due to the lack of outside grounds, pupils take part in a variety of both organised and self-initiated activity at lunchtimes and breaktimes. Breaks are staggered to ensure that sufficient space is available for pupils to take part in appropriately strenuous physical exercise in the school hall.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They report that it is exceedingly rare for anyone to misbehave. The vast majority of parents agree. No incidents of poor behaviour were noted during the inspection and the school's records indicate that this is typical.
- The school is a friendly, yet orderly, community. Pupils relate well to each other and to adults, whatever their role in school. It is the norm for pupils to say, 'please' and 'thank you' to the lunchtime staff who serve their dinners.
- Pupils greeted the inspector politely, not being afraid to initiate conversation. They intuitively move aside, allowing others to pass in corridors.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. They are keen to learn and to contribute to discussions during lessons, for example to select and justify their choice of the most appropriate adjective to describe a chocolate cake.
- Frequent reminders of the importance of regular attendance at school, combined with a rigorous approach to following up absence, have been effective. Attendance is currently at a similar level to that seen nationally in 2015, an improvement on last year's figure.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception was above the national average. In 2015, the proportion was similar to that seen nationally.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 was similar to that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 3 was above the national average in writing but marginally below average in reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check dipped in 2015, having been above, and significantly above, average in the two preceding years. As a result, leaders have provided additional training to support the teaching of phonics. The school's information about pupils' progress shows that pupils are currently making rapid progress in their phonics development.
- The school's records relating to the progress of pupils currently on roll, indicate that they are making good progress. Regular checks to confirm the accuracy of this information are made at both school and trust level.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to others nationally. There are no significant differences between their attainment and that of their peers in school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have difficulty learning to read are well supported. They quickly develop the phonics knowledge they need to allow them to access more advanced texts. Texts are well chosen to match pupils' reading ability, providing a good level of challenge, while allowing pupils to understand and enjoy the text they are reading.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress during Reception so that they are ready to start Year 1. These pupils are currently making good progress throughout the school because of the close attention teachers give to the development of their language skills.

## Early years provision

is good

- The newly recruited Reception teacher is well supported by the REAch2 associate school leader, whose specialism is in early years. This is helping to ensure a smooth transition between teachers and a continuity of provision for children. This effective leadership and management is indicative of the close relationship between the trust and the school.
- The majority of children joining the Reception class speak English as an additional language. Close attention to their needs results in them making rapid progress in their spoken language and with their early reading and writing skills. As a result, children are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- Adults have a good understanding of what constitutes effective practice in the early years. They take every opportunity to speak to children, posing questions which make them think more deeply. They make the most of opportunities to introduce children to new vocabulary, for example by capitalising on a child's fascination with rice, to discuss how it is cooked.
- The teaching of phonics is well structured, ensuring that opportunities to practise what has been learned previously are balanced with the teaching of new sounds. An emphasis on checking that children understand the words they are speaking and reading helps to establish the expectation that children will understand the meaning of the text.
- Planned activities and adult support help children to develop the confidence to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for them. For example, while painting a sign for the hospital set up in the role play area, children, rather than the adults, were expected to squeeze paint from the containers onto their mixing palettes. This approach supports children's personal development well.
- Adults consider carefully when to intervene and provide support, and when to leave children to discover their own solutions to problems. For example, noticing the difficulty a child was having using tweezers to pick up plastic pegs, the adult supported them to adopt a more effective grip.
- Children take care of their environment, treating property with respect and playing with their friends without incident. They are observant, noticing when something needs doing. For example, of his own choice, a boy swept up the rice which had accidentally been spilled from a tray where children had been practising their writing using wooden lolly sticks.
- Staff communicate well with parents, sharing children's achievements at school through stickers or notes. Less formal arrangements are in place to collect information from parents about children's achievements at home.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138275
<b>Local authority</b>	Westminster
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008836

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	100
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Joint Chairs</b>	Dimitris Boukas and Xiao Cai
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sharon Daniel
<b>Telephone number</b>	0207 723 6406
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.minerva.academy">www.minerva.academy</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@minerva.academy">office@minerva.academy</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21–22 January 2014

## Information about this school

- When it opened in September 2012, the school was named CET Primary School Westminster. A new sponsor was sought following the previous inspection in January 2014. The school joined the REAch2 multi-academy trust in September 2014 under its new name of The Minerva Academy.
- The school is significantly smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in single aged classes, with the exception of Years 4 and 5. Pupils in these year groups are combined into one class due to lower numbers.
- A very high proportion of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the start of the school year. This occurs for a variety of reasons, including those associated with parents moving to and from the area for employment purposes.
- A lower proportion of pupils than seen nationally have special educational needs or disabilities.
- Approximately four-fifths of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- A significantly greater proportion of pupils than seen nationally are eligible for the pupil premium, additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils.
- The school is due to move to purpose built accommodation in Paddington Basin, when construction is complete.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector made short visits to each classroom, jointly with the headteacher, to observe teaching and learning. He also observed pupils during playtimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and a group of staff. He also met with three members of the local governing body, including one of the two co-chairs. Meetings also took place with the chair of the recently disbanded transition board and with the Executive Principal, who represents the trust at a regional level.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and held discussions with a group of older pupils. As well as looking at pupils' work during visits to lessons, a selection of pupils' workbooks were scrutinised.
- The inspector took account of the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire. He had a telephone conversation with one parent and received information from another who had contacted Ofsted directly.
- The inspector met with parents at the beginning of the school day and considered the 17 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including those about pupils' achievement, the academy's checks on the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Jeremy Loukes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector



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