

Robert Blair Primary School

Brewery Road, Islington, London, N7 9QJ

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, working closely with his senior colleagues and governing body, has improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection so that it is now consistently good. As a result, pupils currently in the school make good progress and achieve well.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are taught well. The wide range of well-resourced activities hold the children's attention. As a result, children make good progress in all areas.
- Teachers make their expectations clear to pupils and establish good working relationships with them. They mark pupils' work thoroughly and make sure that they know what to do to make their work even better.
- The school's provision for pupils with a statement of special educational needs for speech, language and communication difficulties is good. Specialist staff are expert at meeting the needs of these pupils. Pupils across the school benefit from their expertise.
- Parents express very positive views about the school and most would recommend it to others.
- Pupils' positive attitudes make a good contribution to their learning. They behave well in the classroom and around the school. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now in line with the national average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is diligent, thorough and effective. Pupils feel safe in school and say they have few concerns about bullying because, on the rare occasions when it occurs, staff deal with it effectively.
- The school has developed a very strong set of values. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with a variety of good opportunities for learning about different subjects and the wider world.
- Members of the governing body know the school very well and have contributed strongly to its continuing improvement. They hold school leaders to account and set them ambitious targets to make sure that teaching becomes even better, and that pupils make even faster progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently high enough to result in pupils making outstanding progress and attaining the highest levels of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not get enough chances to observe and to share outstanding practice.
- Tasks are not always sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able pupils.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to extend their reading skills in subjects other than English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 12 lessons. Seven of these were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, both informally and formally. They heard younger pupils read and talked to them about their reading habits.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents, including 35 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and written communication from two parents. They also talked to some parents before school. Inspectors considered the views of staff expressed in 42 responses to the inspection questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with representatives from the local authority’s advisory service, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. Inspectors held meetings with members of the senior and extended leadership teams, and other staff.
- Inspectors examined information on pupils’ progress and the work of children from the Reception class and of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2. Other school documentation considered included: the school’s self-evaluation and development planning; the minutes of governing body meetings; and information on pupils’ achievement. Behaviour logs, policies and information relating to child protection and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Barbara Firth, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gary Rawlings	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Four fifths of the pupils belong to minority ethnic groups and just under two thirds of the pupils speak English as an additional language. These proportions are above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average. These needs are predominantly speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school's provision for the early years is based in a 52-place Nursery offering full- and part-time places, and a Reception class. All children in Reception attend full time.
- The school has a language and communication resource base, which supports up to 20 pupils from across the local authority. These pupils have all been diagnosed with speech, language and communication difficulties. At the time of this inspection there were 18 pupils supported by the resource base. Pupils are fully integrated and in 2014 five pupils in Year 6 received support from the resource.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding given to schools for disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for free school meals or are children who are looked after.
- In 2014 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Pupils not supported by the resource base met the floor standards.
- Since the previous inspection four members of staff have left. Currently, there are two newly qualified teachers and one Teach First trainee teacher in their first year of training.
- The headteacher is retiring at the end of this academic year. The deputy headteacher has been promoted to a headship in another local authority. The governors have recruited a substantive headteacher for September 2015. To support the school through this period of change the governors have worked closely with the local authority to establish a collaborative partnership with Hargrave Park Primary School. In addition, the senior leadership team has been restructured and extended to create two new senior roles focused on leading teaching and learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to accelerate progress and raise attainment further by making sure that:
 - teachers always provide the right level of challenge for all pupils, especially the most able
 - pupils have more regular opportunities to read challenging texts and other materials in subjects other than English
 - activities in reading lessons are always purposeful and support the ongoing development of the full range of pupils' reading skills
 - there are increased opportunities for teachers to observe and to share outstanding practice.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- There is a strong commitment by all leaders, including governors, to improve this school. Together they have ensured that there has been an acceleration in the school's improvement since the previous inspection. They have made sure that the school is a harmonious and well-ordered community where good teaching and good behaviour are the rule.
- Leaders' successful measures to improve the quality of teaching have resulted in achievement for pupils currently in the school improving significantly compared with previous years. This is because leaders have been particularly effective since the previous inspection in improving teachers' subject knowledge in areas where it was relatively weak.
- Middle leaders who have particular responsibilities are knowledgeable and keen to raise pupils' achievement, and to promote their well-being. They are fully involved in the checking of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and support their colleagues well in developing their practice to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Leaders set demanding targets for teachers in terms of raising pupils' achievement, including those who are supported by extra funding. They make sure that teachers receive the support they need to improve their practice by, for example, providing them with coaching or enabling them to attend appropriate courses. Teachers new to the school or to the profession spoke warmly of the support and encouragement they had received from their colleagues, as well as from senior leaders. The headteacher also ensures that any pay increases are linked explicitly to teachers' success in meeting their targets.
- The local authority has kept a close eye on the school's progress since its last inspection. The well-tailored training and support which it has provided have made a significant contribution to the school's development especially in the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) and writing. Their support will continue into the next academic year in order to support the new headteacher and the collaborative partnership.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and tackle any potential discrimination. They make sure that the additional funding which the school receives to promote the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is used well. This extra money has enabled the school to narrow gaps in attainment for eligible pupils.
- The school has made good use of funding provided to increase pupils' participation in physical activity and to improve their skills. It has done this by employing specialist coaches to work alongside teachers and to run after-school clubs. The school is now able to ensure that all pupils learn how to swim, which has encouraged a significant number to join swimming clubs at their local pool.
- The speech, communication and language resource base is very well managed. The staff's expertise has a very positive effect on the achievement of other pupils who have special educational needs.
- Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum which enables them to make good progress in academic and other subjects and enhances their personal development. Writing and mathematics are promoted well through other subjects. However, leaders have not yet ensured that teachers take sufficient opportunities to promote reading outside of English lessons.
- Pupils learn to understand and appreciate different cultures and traditions, including different religious beliefs. They benefit from taking part in special events, visits and out-of-school activities. Pupils learn the importance of respect for others' views and of democratic decision-making through, for example, participation in their very effective and active school council. The strong promotion of all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in them being very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet government requirements. Partnerships with outside agencies are strong and ensure that vulnerable pupils are given the appropriate support in order to enjoy school and achieve well.
- Most parents, including those who spoke or wrote to inspectors, as well as those who responded to Ofsted's online survey, report favourably about the way the school responds to any concerns they may have. They are pleased with the quality of the information they receive about their children's progress and agree that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very much aware of how well the pupils are achieving compared to those in other schools, and of the quality of teaching throughout the school. This is because they carefully examine the headteacher's reports and also visit the school regularly. They are skilled and knowledgeable, and they attend training to improve their ability to hold the school to account.
 - Governors also know in detail what senior leaders have done to challenge relatively weaker teaching.

They fully support the school's systems for ensuring that pay increases for teachers are closely related to their performance, especially in relation to raising pupils' achievement.

- Governors make sure that the school's resources, including additional funding given for specific purposes, are used well for pupils' benefit. They also ensure that the school's procedures for safeguarding are fit for purpose.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond well to school leaders' and teachers' high expectation of them in terms of behaviour. Pupils' positive and cooperative attitudes enhance their learning and enable lessons to proceed smoothly and this contributes well to improvements in their progress.
- The school has developed its systems for managing behaviour and pupils and parents recognise that behaviour has improved. Pupils are clear about the systems of reward and sanctions and are proud of their school.
- Low-level disruption is very uncommon. However, a few pupils can become distracted when they are given insufficiently challenging tasks to complete by themselves.
- The pride pupils take in their work is shown by the way they take care that written work is usually neat and well presented.
- Around the school, pupils behave considerately towards others. They are polite and caring. Older pupils take on a range of responsibilities including supporting younger pupils and children. They volunteer to carry out various tasks around the school such as distributing fruit and helping in the playground and the dining hall. Pupils take good care of the school's environment.
- A very small minority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey did not agree that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved or that it deals well with bullying. Inspectors' examination of the school's records, as well as what pupils told them about typical behaviour, do not endorse these concerns.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now in line with the national average. This is contributing positively to improvements in pupils' achievement.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. A very large majority of their parents agree that this is the case, and that the school looks after their children well. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, for example when using the internet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as persistent unkindness and name-calling. They report, however, that they have few concerns about bullying because, when it does happen occasionally, the school deals with any instances swiftly and effectively so that it does not recur.
- Leaders make sure that the school's premises are secure.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers make sure that pupils know what is expected of them in terms of both work and behaviour. Their good subject knowledge and their ability to explain tasks clearly ensure that pupils learn topics accurately and in sufficient depth.
- Pupils are making faster progress in reading and writing because teachers are more skilful in the teaching of phonics. Teachers encourage more use of creativity and imagination in preparation for writing. Equally, pupils are making better progress in mathematics because teachers provide them with improved strategies for learning number. However, teachers do not take every opportunity to encourage pupils to read in subjects other than in English. In addition, the lack of challenge of some of the activities provided in specific reading lessons does not always allow pupils to make the progress required to develop their wider reading skills.
- Teachers have improved their use of information about pupils' attainment and the progress they are making. They encourage pupils to take risks with their learning, to try harder tasks and to learn from their mistakes. However, work is not always demanding enough to ensure that the most-able pupils make accelerated progress.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from teaching which caters very well for their different needs. Class teachers work closely with teaching assistants to make sure that pupils receive the support they need. The quality of specialist teaching and support for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties is high, resulting in them making at least good progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work thoroughly and accurately. They know that pupils understand how to improve their work. This is because pupils regularly respond to teachers' comments by correcting or extending what they have written.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The achievement of pupils has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of school information indicates that most pupils currently in the school make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes those who speak English as an additional language and those from minority ethnic groups.
- The school's results in the national screening of phonics in Year 1 have improved over time. In 2014, the phonics check scores were an improvement on 2013 and just below the national average. School information and assessments indicate that pupils' ability to recognise letters and sounds is continuing to improve. Inspectors observed that the quality of the teaching of phonics is now good and ensures that pupils make at least good progress in developing their early reading skills in Nursery, Reception and Year 1.
- Pupils read with increasing fluency as they move up the school. However, in special reading lessons, activities do not always help pupils develop a range of reading skills. Opportunities to practise reading in subjects other than English are also not fully maximised to ensure that a greater proportion attain the higher levels in reading at the end of both key stages.
- In the past, including in 2014, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 has been low. There has, however, been an upward trend of improvement over time which has accelerated in the current academic year. The majority of pupils currently in Key Stage 1 are now working at standards at or above those expected for their age in all three subjects. These improvements are due to strong and secure improvements in teaching. Pupils now make good progress in all subjects across Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics dipped in 2014 as compared to the previous year and was below the national average. Good and stronger teaching has ensured that a greater proportion of pupils currently in Year 6 are reaching or exceeding the standards expected for their age. Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work books and discussions with pupils about their work during the inspection confirmed that these pupils are making at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014, at the end of Year 6 the progress that pupils had made across the key stage was below the national average in reading and mathematics. However, it was in line with the national average in writing and an improvement on 2013 in all three subjects. School assessments supported by work seen in pupils' work books indicates that the proportion of pupils currently in Year 6 who are making good progress is improving still further.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils over time and for those currently in the school, varies too much between subjects. In 2014, although an improvement on 2013, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 was below the national average in all subjects. At the end of Key Stage 2 the proportion attaining the higher levels was also below the national average. Pupils are not always challenged appropriately in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014, the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 and their peers narrowed. Disadvantaged pupils attained better than their classmates in all subjects and a larger proportion made good progress in mathematics and writing. The gap in attainment, however, between disadvantaged pupils in school and others nationally was eight months behind in mathematics and writing, ten months in reading and five months in English, grammar, punctuation and spelling. This gap is closing for current Year 6 pupils because standards are rising as a consequence of better teaching. Gaps between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally are also narrowing.
- The school tracks the achievement of vulnerable pupils and those with a disability or special educational needs very carefully. They are well supported in class, resulting in good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils throughout the school benefit from the expertise and support of the language and communication resource base. It provides a very caring environment where pupils' personal and

emotional development is very well supported. Pupils who receive specialist support make at least good progress, with some individuals making excellent progress from their individual starting points. This is because teaching is consistently good, and teaching assistants are very well trained and work exceptionally well with these pupils.

The early years provision

is good

- Children enter the early years with levels of skill and knowledge below those typical for their age. The proportion of children that reach a good level of development has been increasing over time. Current school assessments and information, supported by evidence collected by inspectors during the inspection, indicate that the proportion is continuing to rise. This represents good progress and indicates that children are well prepared for learning in the rest of the school.
- The indoor and outdoor areas are well presented, organised efficiently and used to promote learning effectively. Children engage successfully in adult-led and independent activities. They demonstrate high levels of concentration and resilience, including when they are being encouraged to complete tasks that they are finding difficult.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Children make a good start in learning to read and write because adults model sounds and letters correctly, and make sure that children can recognise them and reproduce them accurately. Adults also ensure that there are good opportunities, both indoors and outdoors for children to develop their counting and measuring skills.
- Teachers and other adults communicate clearly to children in ways that excite their curiosity and develop communication skills well. Most adults use questioning effectively to deepen children's understanding. Early years leaders recognise that occasionally, however, the impact of adults' questioning on learning is limited when they do not give children enough time to think before answering.
- Staff quickly identify the individual needs of disadvantaged and disabled children, and those who have special educational needs. They regularly assess children's progress and work closely with parents, as well as outside professionals when appropriate, to plan activities which suit children's particular interests and abilities. This ensures that children are able to thrive.
- Children are friendly and excited to be in school. They behave considerately towards each other. Inspectors witnessed children sharing resources and cooperating well.
- Staff are caring and kind. They ensure that children feel at ease, are kept safe and learn how to keep themselves safe, for example as they use the outdoor equipment.
- Staff monitor children's achievements and needs accurately and regularly from the time they enrol. Early year's staff communicate very well with parents through for example journals that record children's activities and achievements. Parents are welcome in school and encouraged, with increasing success, to take part in workshops and opportunities to learn alongside their children.
- The early years leader evaluates the impact of the provision carefully and thoroughly and makes suitable improvements. Good leadership is helping children to make consistently good progress.
- The early years is not yet outstanding because leaders have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently of a high enough quality to enable children to make outstanding progress in their learning and development.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100422
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	462148

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Lally
Headteacher	Mark Miller
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 June 2013
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