

Apex Primary School

60–62 Argyle Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 3BG

Inspection dates	20–21 July 2016
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Previously inspected by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils are not yet good. Leaders are not using information about pupils' progress sufficiently well to identify underachievement quickly and precisely enough. New systems to check pupils' progress have not yet had time to have an impact.
- Teachers do not use questioning consistently well to deepen pupils' understanding, especially for the most able.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough in all subjects.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to practise their reading, writing and numeracy skills in a wide range of subjects.
- School leaders do not always provide sharply focused feedback to teachers about how their teaching can improve further.
- Leaders are not using their monitoring activities effectively enough to analyse the school's performance accurately. As a result, the school has an over-inflated view of its overall performance.
- The early years provision requires improvement. It does not have sufficiently robust systems for checking on the progress that children make over time.
- Children in the early years do not always have sufficient access to outdoor learning. This limits children's opportunities for physical development.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is fully committed to ensuring that the school moves forward at a rapid rate. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes are improving rapidly.
- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Those responsible for governance use their wide range of expertise to support the school; they ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- The work to keep pupils safe is effective. The school provides a nurturing environment in which pupils feel secure and can flourish.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- The behaviour and personal development of pupils is good. They are courteous, respectful and well-mannered.
- Parents are supportive of the school. They appreciate the quality of learning opportunities the school provides for their children and are pleased with the education their children receive.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress further by ensuring that:
 - teachers use questions well to check pupils' learning and deepen their understanding, especially for the most able
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in all the subjects that are taught
 - pupils have more opportunities to practise their reading, writing and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on teaching and pupils' progress by:
 - analysing pupils' skills when they start school and measuring their progress more precisely
 - ensuring that assessment information is used to identify and address any underperformance swiftly
 - providing sharply focused feedback to teachers following lesson observations so that they have a better understanding of how they can improve their teaching
 - improving monitoring systems to enable school leaders and those responsible for governance to accurately analyse the school's performance.
- Improve the quality of the early years provision by:
 - more rigorously establishing what each child knows and can do when they start at the school and then using this information to check progress and plan their next steps in learning
 - making sure that children are provided with better access to play and learning outdoors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher inspires confidence in her staff. She has created a culture where the urgency of bringing about sustained improvements is more pronounced. As a result, the capacity to improve is strong, as seen in improved teaching in English and mathematics and better outcomes.
- Detailed checks and rigorous monitoring have ensured that all the independent school standards are met and the school is a safe place for its pupils and staff. However, leaders do not have a thorough enough understanding of the quality of education at the school. As a result, actions to address areas of concern do not always bring about rapid enough improvements, and self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement are over-positive. This makes it difficult for those responsible for governance to hold the school to account to ensure it is improving fast enough.
- Systems for checking on the work of the school ensure that the quality of teaching is reviewed regularly. As a result, there have been improvements in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. However, the feedback to teachers is not always focused sharply enough on how to ensure that all groups of pupils make good or better progress.
- A system for tracking pupils' progress has been introduced across a range of subjects. Regular discussions with individual teachers about pupils' achievement are beginning to raise expectations about what all groups of pupils are capable of achieving. However, this is new and leaders do not yet track pupils' progress effectively enough from when they start school. This prevents senior leaders from identifying any pupil underperformance swiftly enough and ensuring that all pupils make the progress they are capable of.
- The range of subjects taught is appropriate and supports the school in achieving its aim to provide a balanced combination of Islamic studies and academic education. The rich curriculum in English and mathematics ensures that pupils make strong progress in these key subjects. However, scrutiny of pupils' 'thematics' books shows that they do not get the opportunity to learn about some concepts in greater depth in subjects such as history and geography. An exciting curriculum in Islamic studies adds a whole new dimension to pupils' overall learning experience. Regular trips and visits, for example to British public institutions, help pupils to make connections in their learning with the world outside school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is carefully threaded through the majority of subjects, and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. British values are promoted strongly through regular discussions about current news; this ensures that such values as tolerance and respect are encouraged. Older pupils discuss issues such as acts of terrorism, the plight of refugees and the European Union referendum. They learn to express their opinions appropriately. Staff help pupils to form balanced opinions, and challenge any stereotypic views that pupils might express.
- Staff set the tone for the school by leading by example in their attitudes and behaviour. They actively promote the school's values and act as excellent role models to the pupils in their care.
- Parents are very positive and confident about the quality of the school's work. Parents say that they would recommend the school to other parents. They are particularly complimentary about the positive impact the school has on their children's well-being and attitudes to education.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Those responsible for governance are ambitious for the school. They bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise from their professional roles. They provide support for the headteacher in ensuring that the school meets its aims and all the independent school standards are met.
 - Leaders are held to account and are asked suitable questions about the quality of teaching and learning that the school provides. However, trustees' ability to ask more challenging questions is limited by the lack of more detailed information about pupils' progress and teaching.
 - Performance management, including that of the headteacher, is used appropriately to target professional development opportunities in order to improve the quality of teaching and pupil achievement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Rigorous procedures are in place and leaders have ensured that policies relating to safer practice to protect the welfare of pupils are implemented consistently. This is evident, for example, in the procedures related to the recruitment of staff. Policies take into account the most recent legislation and guidelines. The 'Prevent' duty risk assessment highlights the generic risks; leaders are working with the local authority and police to get greater clarity on local threats in order to use this information to further sharpen their risk assessment processes. Safeguarding

practice is supported by strong relationships and staff know the needs of pupils very well. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the fact that the school keeps their children safe and that their well-being is a priority.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and they use this well to help pupils to gain new knowledge and skills. For example, in a mathematics lesson, Year 6 pupils extended their knowledge of reflection and translation to being able to rotate shapes.
- Teachers have high expectations for pupils in English and mathematics and they set challenging targets that support pupils' learning well. However, this is not consistent in other subjects. Pupils do not always have the opportunity to learn in sufficient depth in subjects such as history, geography, art and technology because teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Questioning is often used well to probe pupils' understanding and challenge them to improve their work. Occasionally though, questioning does not go beyond getting pupils to recall basic facts; this slows down the learning of the most able pupils in particular because they are not given the opportunity to sharpen their reasoning skills.
- While teachers are adept at developing pupils' reading and writing skills in English and their numeracy skills in mathematics, opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in a wide range of subjects other than mathematics and English are still not yet fully developed across the curriculum.
- Where learning is most effective, teaching gives pupils the small steps they need to build their confidence and be successful. For example, Year 1 pupils were shown how to use a checklist to assess and improve the quality of their writing. Teachers also make good use of working walls in classrooms to make useful links between previous learning and new learning.
- Most teachers follow the school's marking policy to show pupils where they have gone wrong and what they need to do to improve their learning to make quicker progress. Books show pupils' pride in their work across a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers provide useful verbal feedback on the quality and content of pupils' work. Teachers use this information to provide additional support to pupils who are struggling with any aspect of their learning.
- Pupils enjoy positive and supportive relationships with their teachers. Several pupils spoke to the inspectors about how much they appreciate the support and encouragement their teachers give them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils become confident, effective learners. They benefit from an effective personal, social and health education programme which provides them with a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills. Staff support this further by placing a clear emphasis on promoting tolerance, mutual respect and self-discipline.
- Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe when using mobile technologies, the internet and in the wider community. As a result, they have a good understanding of risks and how to minimise them.
- Pupils draw well on the teachings of their own faith in relation to keeping themselves safe from extremist views and radical behaviour. For example, one pupil said that he would want to give 'Nasihah' (advice and guidance) to anyone who expressed such views.
- Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures, for example Judaism, Hinduism and Sikhism, and some have visited a homeless shelter. Leaders recognise that further work remains to embed the teaching of other religions into the school's curriculum.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff, parents and pupils agree that this is the case.
- Pupils act with maturity and self-discipline throughout the school day. During breaks and lunchtimes, they conduct themselves sensibly and responsibly. Pupils behaved very well in public when visiting the local park for their physical education lesson.

- Pupils are keen to learn and eager to be successful. They want to acquire knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and the values it stands for.
- Pupils are confident that bullying does not exist at Apex Primary. They know that if they have any concerns or anxieties, adults listen and are readily available to provide guidance and support. School records confirm that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are very rare and are followed up swiftly and thoroughly when they occur.
- Pupils show respect for each other's views and wait for their turn to speak. They display good social and emotional skills when working in a group and this positive attitude supports their learning.
- Attendance is good because of the strong partnership between staff and families, who work together to ensure that pupils arrive at school on time and are ready to learn.
- Occasionally, some pupils lose focus and concentration in lessons when the teaching fails to inspire them.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because pupils' progress is not yet good in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils' knowledge and skills are developed well in English and mathematics. They achieve broadly average standards by the end of Year 6, sometimes above, and make good progress in these key subjects. However, in other subjects their depth of understanding is not as great and progress over time is slow. Pupils' books show insufficient evidence of progression in skills and understanding in subjects such as history, geography and design technology.
- Many pupils make strong progress in science, developing in particular the skills of sharp observation, recording and analysis of results. This is evident in pupils' books, which show that pupils are given regular opportunities to investigate scientific problems.
- Younger pupils make rapid progress in reading because phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught effectively. Pupils are skilful in applying the strategies they have learned when they come across new words.
- The school's information shows that pupils achieve well in Arabic and Islamic studies. Pupils spend more time learning these subjects and the planning on how to teach these subjects has been well thought through. For example, the links to current topical issues and events through the school's regular 'Newswatch' programme enhances pupils' motivation to learn at greater depth.
- The progress of pupils is variable because they are not always well supported when they fail to make sufficient progress. For example, the most able pupils do not always achieve well because they are not challenged to make the best possible progress.
- The school has identified the few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English. Staff use tools and resources to make appropriate provision for these groups. As a result, they are fully included in lessons and their progress is equivalent to that of their peers.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Leadership and management of the early years provision require improvement. Leaders do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of how to track children's progress and use the outcomes to support learning.
- Children's knowledge and understanding are not routinely assessed when they start school and progress in the different areas of learning is not systematically checked against a clear starting point.
- The outdoor area has limited resources and children do not get enough opportunity for purposeful play. As a result, children make slower progress in their physical development than in other areas.
- The indoor areas of learning are well organised, providing children with a range of activities to make links in their learning and stimulate creativity. Consequently, children develop into inquisitive learners.
- Adults in the setting are skilful in capturing evidence of children's learning and this provides a clear record of the journey of each child. Children's work in both Nursery and Reception demonstrates that they make steady progress in all areas of learning.
- Relationships between the children and staff are a strength. This enables children to thrive and develop in an environment where they feel safe and secure. Consequently, children are happy and confident in their

learning, quickly acquiring the necessary skills to do things for themselves. This makes them reasonably well prepared as they start in Year 1.

- Behaviour is good, supported by a lot of positive interaction between children and between children and adults. Routines are well established and consistently applied by all staff in and outside the classroom.
- The safety of children is good. Adults are appropriately trained in all aspects of keeping children safe. They watch children carefully and know how to report any concerns they may have.
- Parents are pleased with how quickly their children settle in the early years and with the education their children are receiving. They welcome the opportunities they have to talk with staff, effectively linking learning at home and school.

School details

Unique reference number	126620
Inspection number	10012986
DfE registration number	317/6077

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Muslim faith school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Gulraze Akhtar
Chair	Sultanah Parvin
Headteacher	Meherun Hamid
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,380
Telephone number	020 8554 1208
Website	www.apexprimary.co.uk
Email address	contact@apexprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Previously inspected by The Bridge Inspectorate, 22–25 April 2013

Information about this school

- Apex Primary School opened in 2004 and is run by Apex Trust, a charitable foundation with seven trustees. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are also members of the trust.
- Apex Primary is a small, independent day school catering for the needs of boys and girls aged three to 11 in the area of Ilford, East London.
- In May 2009, the school moved to its present premises where it occupies two converted and refurbished terraced houses in a side street in the London Borough of Redbridge.
- At the time of the inspection, there were 28 pupils in the early years foundation stage. All pupils in Reception attend full time. Twelve children in Nursery attend either the morning or afternoon session each day; seven attend full time.
- The school was last inspected by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate in April 2013.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very low. No pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, but only a few are at an early stage of learning English.
- Apex Primary is a Muslim faith school whose stated aim is to provide 'a strong Islamic foundation with a high standard of academic education, a balanced combination which will give the child the best start in life'.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Learning was observed in 15 lessons; four of these were joint observations with school leaders.
- Samples of pupils' work and children's learning journeys were scrutinised.
- The inspectors spoke to teachers, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and the trustees about their work. The inspectors also had a discussion with two groups of pupils and talked to some parents who had come to collect their children at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the 36 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, and the 12 responses from staff to the staff questionnaire.
- Documentation and policies were checked for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, Lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Clementina Aina	Ofsted Inspector

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