

Ambler Primary School and Children's Centre

Blackstock Road, Finsbury Park, London N4 2DR

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Successful improvements implemented since the previous inspection have ensured that the school is now outstanding.
- The determination and energy of the headteacher have brought about a clear vision of high ambition and aspiration for both pupils and staff.
- Governors' excellent knowledge of the school's performance means that they have a clear insight into the considerable strengths of the school.
- Teaching is outstanding. Pupils make rapid gains because of the effective approach of teachers in consistently asking probing questions to deepen their learning.
- Highly engaged pupils enjoy their learning and respond very well to guidance from their teachers about how to improve their work.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. They make strong progress from their particular starting points.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, have extremely high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The curriculum is relevant and well planned to excite pupils' interest in a wide range of topics.
- Safeguarding is effective. A robust recruitment procedure helps ensure that pupils are kept from harm.
- Pupils respond positively to the school's behaviour system. They have a perceptive understanding of the system's rewards and sanctions. This has led to the impeccable standards of behaviour across the school.
- The early years provision is outstanding. The staff in the Nursery and Reception classes organise exciting learning activities both indoors and outdoors. This enables children to progress well from their low starting points.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are extremely well developed because of the successful promotion of the wider curriculum.
- Parents speak very highly of the school. They know that their children are taught well and kept safe.
- Teachers' effective use of assessment information ensures that differences in pupils' progress, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is being swiftly eradicated.
- Senior leaders have rightly identified that although the most able pupils, including the disadvantaged, make good progress, they are capable of achieving more.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- ensure that teachers provide further opportunities to challenge the most able, including disadvantaged most-able pupils, so that the proportion of pupils exceeding the expected standards increases, particularly in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The steely determination of the headteacher, with the strong support of the governing body, have secured rapid improvements in pupils' progress. She, alongside the highly skilled senior leaders, inspires the whole school community to 'achieve more'. Staff morale is very high and they feel valued by the school's leadership.
- Senior leaders, including governors, use a wide range of information to make accurate evaluations of the school's strengths. They are also direct about the school's areas for development. This demonstrates an uncompromising attitude to continuous school improvement from leadership at all levels.
- Performance management is highly effective and results in raising standards. This is because leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers' classroom practice raises pupils' standards. It has resulted in a highly skilled group of teachers and team of support staff who have secured strong improvements for all pupils.
- Middle leaders are exceptionally skilled in leading their subjects. Subject leaders work well with teachers to support the planning of the exciting, topic-based curriculum. They use a wide range of information to assess pupils' progress over the range of curriculum subjects. This approach ensures that middle leaders are successfully honing their own leadership skills, ready to take on additional responsibilities.
- The headteacher strongly believes in developing personal as well as academic excellence. These elements of the school's vision have equal value. Leaders draw out the best in all staff to benefit pupils' achievements. Teachers new to the profession are exceptionally well supported with bespoke induction programmes to meet their developing needs.
- The effective use of the additional physical education and sport funding provides a range of activities led by specialist instructors both in school time and out of school hours. These activities include multi-sports, fitness training and badminton.
- Leaders use the additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. This ensures that pupils receive the right support to make good progress from their starting points.
- The use of pupil premium funding is well targeted to improve pupils' progress. Additional staff and resources successfully contribute to raising standards for these pupils, often from very low and challenging starting points.
- The school's highly inclusive ethos ensures that excellent guidance is given to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Accurate early identification of needs means that school leaders secure parental involvement with the school's plan of support. Consequently, pupils achieve extremely well from their starting points.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent. Pupils have a deep understanding of how British values contribute to preparing them for life in modern Britain. For example, the assembly on democracy included lively discussions on how the 'hustings' system works in elections.

- Pupils are rightly very proud of their school. They are keen to talk about how teachers help them improve their work. They enjoy and participate in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that the school provides for them.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the high aspirations set by the school's leadership of the school. Many responses on the free-text section of Ofsted's online survey mentioned their admiration for the headteacher and her 'firm but fair' approach to their children. The active parents' groups were also highlighted. For example, 'Grow Ambler' gives parents opportunities to get together and give something back to the school. As a result, parents feel valued and welcomed at Ambler Primary School.
- Leaders know what they need to do to maintain the school's outstanding provision. Consequently, inspectors and leaders agree that teachers need to focus on accelerating the progress of the most able pupils, especially in mathematics.

Governance of the school

- Governors have strong leadership from the chair of governors who, with the rest of the highly skilled group, has set high expectations for their work. Governors secure appropriate training to improve their skills. Their roles and responsibilities are clear. Minutes of governing body meetings show that they ask the right questions so they are able to challenge leaders and continually support school improvement.
- Governors know the school well and what it needs to do to maintain its growing positive public profile in the local community. They have a shared ambition to continue to provide an excellent quality of education for pupils.
- Senior leaders ensure that governors have a thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school. They ensure that pupil premium, additional funding for special educational needs, and physical education and sport funding are spent well to benefit pupils. They fulfil all statutory duties effectively. Governors ensure that the website provides all the necessary information to parents.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well cared for and are safe from harm. Staff are trained and understand the government's current child-protection requirements. All staff know how to raise concerns and whom to contact if they need to escalate an issue.
- Leaders ensure that the processes for recruitment are robust. Staff checks are of high quality and fit for purpose. Governors check recruitment processes and that the single central record is up to date.
- The inclusion manager leads on safeguarding. She ensures that all staff are aware of their statutory responsibilities in keeping children safe. Training has taken place to ensure that staff know their duties, including those in relation to female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Parents are supportive of the work that the school does to keep their children safe. They appreciate the workshops that keep them informed of how to protect their

children when using digital technology.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. The approach to deepening pupils' learning is used extremely effectively. Staff question pupils with precision that continually probes their knowledge and understanding of their learning.
- Relationships are extremely positive between all adults and pupils. Teaching assistants, are well trained and provide a high level of support for all pupils across all abilities.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught very well. Early identification ensures that they have the right support to enable them to make strong progress from their starting points.
- Reading is taught well from the time pupils start at the school. Pupils use a range of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words. The impact of the highly effective phonics teaching was evident when inspectors listened to pupils reading. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, quickly develop fluency and stamina as they move up the school. As a result, progress in reading is rapid and improving.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have access to high-quality texts through their reading sessions. Year 6 read 'Great Expectations' by Charles Dickens, while in Year 5 pupils study 'Macbeth'. This produced excellent writing responses. Pupils used a variety of challenging vocabulary confidently in their writing pieces, for example when describing how Lady Macbeth was 'pouring scorn' on another character. Owing to the high-quality grammar teaching across the school, pupils develop their writing skills extremely well. Consequently, pupils' progress in writing is strong.
- Teaching within the wider curriculum is a particular strength of the school. Staff have the same high expectations about the quality of work that pupils produce in these lessons as they do in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 3 study volcanoes. They produced excellent pieces of work describing the effects of an eruption.
- Teachers are developing strategies to provide the higher ability pupils with work that matches their ability more swiftly. Leaders agree that additional opportunities are needed to ensure most-able pupils, including disadvantaged most-able pupils, excel even further and attain at the higher levels, particularly in mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders work effectively with other agencies, including the local authority and social care services, when they have identified pupils who may be at risk. The school places mental well-being as an important element for pupils to be able to achieve. The school

invests in services that promote positive attitudes to emotional health. This results in high-quality support plans that ensure that pupils develop effective coping strategies, remaining in school and being ready to learn.

- Additional physical education and sport funding is used to employ external coaches who ensure that the activities on offer at breaktimes develop pupils' secure understanding of physical well-being. Football is available to both boys and girls. Any game in the new multi-games area includes both sexes. This effectively promotes pupils' sense of equality.
- Older pupils apply for jobs such as 'peer buddies' to enable them to help younger children enjoy a productive playtime. This has reduced the number of low-level incidents.
- The 'enterprise week' opens up the world of work for pupils. This gives the pupils an insight into the world of work. Pupils told inspectors that they had high ambitions for a job in the future. They listed careers such as teacher, lawyer and doctor.
- Pupils are confident and assured learners. They believe that they can 'achieve more' because leaders and teachers develop self-belief very well. Pupils participate fully in their lessons. They show huge enjoyment in learning new things. Positive relationships are successfully nurtured throughout the school, resulting in happy classrooms where learning is highly valued.
- The school's 'DREAMS' values (determination, resilience, enthusiasm, ambition, motivation and self-belief) develop pupils as future citizens. Pupils say that the values support them and help them to foster respect for each other. Their understanding of the types of bullying is well developed. Pupils are confident in the strategies they have been taught on how to stay safe online. They have complete confidence in the staff to help them if they have any worries. They say that bullying is rare and staff 'make it right in a nice way'.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. They have very high regard for the staff's care of their children. They appreciate the workshops that help them know how to support their children's learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils have high levels of self-discipline. Owing to the effective behaviour management of the staff, no learning time is lost. Classrooms are places of learning and pupils respond to adult instructions quickly.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They demonstrate very good manners to each other and adults alike. They move around the building sensibly. As a result, the school is a calm and orderly place.
- Regular attendance is rewarded and makes pupils want to come to school. Pupils said that they wanted their names in the summer term raffle, where they could win a bike or a portable media player for excellent attendance. Currently, attendance is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- In 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils achieved better than other pupils did nationally.
- Pupils demonstrate a love of reading for pleasure. Those who were heard reading were able to identify and use different forms of punctuation to improve their fluency and expression.
- In Year 1, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was above national averages. Boys made rapid progress from their lower starting points. Disadvantaged pupils also made strong progress, but did not meet the achievement of other pupils nationally. Leaders quickly identified this and put support in place for these pupils to catch up quickly. The work of current pupils shows that this has been successful.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard by the end of Year 6 was above the national average in the combined results for reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's information shows that effective use of the pupil premium funding is providing pupils with high-quality support. This results in rapid progress for these pupils. The progress of disadvantaged pupils by the end of key stage 2, in all subjects in the 2016 assessments, was above that of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their relative starting points. They are supported well throughout the school by their teachers and well-trained teaching assistants. Pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from the same approach, so they too have opportunities to rapidly gain confidence and fluency.
- High-quality teaching and assessment practices in the school ensure that the most able pupils, including disadvantaged most-able pupils, make at least good progress. Leaders agree that further work needs to be done to ensure that a greater proportion attain the higher standards, particularly in mathematics.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years provision is led exceptionally well. Staff work diligently to ensure that the children make accelerated progress from their low starting points. High expectations have enabled them to develop early skills remarkably well.
- Routines are well established and children enter their classrooms ready to learn. The staff have excellent subject knowledge, which enables children to make strong progress in their activities and over time.
- Well-planned activities indoors and out of the classroom follow the children's interests as well as ensuring that they quickly acquire early reading, writing and number skills. Phonic teaching is exceptionally strong. For example, children confidently use terms

like 'phoneme' and 'digraph'. As a result, by the time children start Year 1, they are very well prepared for further developing their reading skills.

- The number of children reaching a good level of development in 2016 was in line with the national average. School information shows that children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make rapid progress from their starting points. Inspectors agreed and this was evident when looking at work in children's books.
- Regular and accurate observations demonstrate the wide range of information collected by staff to support each child. Leaders ensure that relationships with parents and carers are strong, from the time children enter the early years setting. Consequently, children's learning journeys show a high level of parental involvement in the assessment of their children's learning.
- Safeguarding is effective. The members of the early years team work together effectively to ensure that all statutory requirements are met rigorously.

School details

Unique reference number	100397
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10023680

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Nicholson
Headteacher	Juliet Benis
Telephone number	0207 2264708
Website	www.ambler.islington.sch.uk
Email address	juliet.benis@ambler.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 February 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is expanding into a two-form entry primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in most classrooms. Observations were undertaken with the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers and the manager of the children’s centre.
- Inspectors met with members of the local governing body and the local authority representative.
- Meetings were held with pupils from across the school to discuss their learning and views on the school.
- All leaders met with inspectors to discuss their roles and the impact of their work.
- Inspectors heard pupils reading, and talked to pupils in lessons and as they moved around the building.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documents, including information on pupils’ progress, improvement plans, curriculum plans and checks on the quality of teaching. They also examined school records relating to safety and behaviour.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils’ books across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors took account of the 76 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and of information gathered from discussions with a group of parents during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the 25 responses to the staff survey and the 38 responses to the online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sara Morgan, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Dawn Titus	Ofsted Inspector
Raphael Moss	Ofsted Inspector
David Bryant	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017