

Marks Gate Infants' School

Lawn Farm Grove, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 5LL

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher conveys a clear vision for her school, saying, 'Children are at the heart of what we do.' The leadership team has largely addressed the areas for improvement since the previous inspection.
- The recently established governing body is very well informed and provides effective support and challenge to leaders. Governors have an insightful understanding of their role.
- Together with committed governors, senior leaders have created a school where teaching is strong, curriculum provision is effective and pupils achieve well.
- After a period of turbulence following the previous inspection, leaders have raised expectations of what pupils should and can achieve. As a result, pupils' outcomes have improved.
- The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. However, pupils do not consistently apply their skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar in their writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are making good progress. Staff ensure that all pupils are valued and feel safe.
- Children settle quickly into the early years. Their progress is steadily improving because teaching is now effective and leadership is strong. The outdoor provision does not match the effective indoor provision.
- Improvements in the teaching of phonics mean that pupils have secure early reading skills.
- Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to learning. They are well mannered, respectful and kind to each other. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said they always feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The school has appropriate systems to ensure pupils' welfare. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are effective.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enhanced by visiting speakers and a range of trips and visits. British values are fostered well.
- Despite some successes as a result of leaders' extensive actions, attendance remains below the national average. Leaders rightly continue to focus on promoting good attendance for all pupils, including those who are persistently absent.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase pupils' progress in writing at key stage 1 by making sure that:
 - more attention is given to improving skills so that pupils do not make simple errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - the presentation of pupils' work and handwriting is improved so that they write in a fluent, joined-up and legible style.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - there is a continued focus on promoting good attendance for all pupils, as well as improving the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent
 - the outdoor provision in the early years is improved and is of the same quality as the indoor provision.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher is highly ambitious. She is responsive to challenges and requests from governors. Leaders have set the bar high to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. They have been successful in harnessing the support of staff, pupils, parents and carers to move the school forward.
- The leadership of teaching and learning has been central to the school's work and has brought about improvements in pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers have successfully risen to the challenges of higher expectations. Effective checks on the quality of teaching and learning accurately identify whole-school training needs, as well as those for individual members of staff.
- Leaders know their school well. They have accurately identified the areas for improvement and can demonstrate that their actions are having a positive impact on the progress and attainment of the pupils. They recognise those areas of the school's work which still need to improve further and are taking effective steps to address these. Leaders diligently go back and check where teaching still needs to improve. Middle leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are more established as leaders, providing challenge and support in their role of monitoring the work of other colleagues.
- Staff are behind the executive headteacher's vision for improvement. Staff are proud to work at this school. Teachers are skilled in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through lessons and activities. This results in pupils who are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their schooling.
- The school curriculum is carefully planned so that activities enthuse pupils and motivate them to learn. As a result, pupils make strong gains in their skills and knowledge across a wide range of subjects. In Year 2, for instance, pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning about the best conditions for plants to grow. They investigated the impact of different materials and the speed of growth of their plants during a science lesson.
- Senior leaders make good use of the pupil premium funding that the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils. They review regularly how this funding is used to ensure that it helps these pupils to achieve their potential. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Leaders assess pupils' progress once a term and quickly identify any pupils who are falling behind or need additional support. Flexible new approaches to the deployment of teachers within year groups are enabling pupils to access more personalised support. This is resulting in pupils making greater progress.
- Sport funding is used well. Sports coaches engage pupils in physical education lessons and a range of clubs and activities. Pupils are encouraged to develop a good understanding of how to eat healthily and how to keep themselves healthy through regular physical activity.
- The school is an inclusive community where everyone is made to feel welcome. The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors and who completed the Ofsted online

questionnaire, Parent View, were positive about all aspects of the school. One parent wrote, 'The staff put the children at the centre of everything they do.' Another said, 'My little boy has thrived since starting Marks Gate in September. He is like a different child.' These were just two of the written comments submitted by parents when they were asked to share their views of the school.

- Pupils feel valued and speak highly of the staff. They told inspectors that adults encourage them to be tolerant and respectful. This is very apparent in the way that pupils treat each other in lessons and during breaktimes.

Governance of the school

- In response to the findings of the review of governance, the local authority actively sought to recruit governors who could help to boost the work of the governing body. As a collective group, members of the governing body offer pertinent skills and experiences.
- Governors share the executive headteacher's commitment to continuous improvement. They visit the school regularly to check on different aspects of its work and to ensure that they keep well informed about its effectiveness.
- The strong and open working relationship between school leaders and the governing body provides a very effective partnership to ensure that decisions and actions are clearly focused on improving outcomes for pupils. The impact of their combined efforts can be seen in the improvements in the school over the last two years.
- Governors ensure that their safeguarding knowledge is up to date and that the school's policy and practice are strong and secure.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's serious approach to the safeguarding of pupils ensures all pupils' safety. Leaders and managers check every detail and any concerns – however small – are swiftly followed up.
- Leaders make sure that staff training is up to date and that everyone knows how to raise any concerns they may have about pupils. Training and continual updates ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. When new staff are appointed, they receive appropriate information about keeping children safe.
- Following any safeguarding incidents, leaders and governors review the school's procedures and make appropriate changes to the school's systems. A member of the governing body has particular expertise in safeguarding. She works well with school leaders to ensure that the school's policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.
- Pupils have a thorough awareness of how to keep themselves safe – including when online – because of the comprehensive information they receive. The actions of staff to rectify rare instances of bullying give pupils confidence in the adults in school. Pupils feel that they can approach staff with any worries they may have.

- Leaders work effectively with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils are safe and supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve have been raised since the previous inspection. Pupils respond well to the consistent approach to teaching. As a result, they are engaged in and enthusiastic about their learning.
- The learning environment in classrooms is calm and purposeful. Pupils enjoy good relationships with each other and with staff. They work well together on tasks set and applaud each other's successes. This helps pupils to develop their self-confidence as learners.
- The leaders of English and mathematics place high importance on enhancing the skills of teachers and teaching assistants. Using information gleaned from monitoring, they host training for staff to ensure that they all have secure subject knowledge and use effective teaching strategies. As a result, pupils can explain what they are doing with understanding.
- Recent changes to the school's approach to reading in key stage 1 are having a positive impact. New reading resources are inspiring pupils to read books from a wide range of authors and to explore different genres of books. Pupils are enthusiastic readers.
- Leaders identified some weaknesses in the teaching of writing and have worked closely with teachers to address these. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum. Teachers model good sentence structure and provide scaffolding for pupils when required. As a result, work in pupils' books shows that their writing continues to improve. However, inspectors found that, as a result of teachers emphasising expectations in writing, some pupils continue to make the same spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- Leaders check pupils' progress and use assessment information very thoroughly in mathematics and English. They carefully analyse the information they gain and use it to identify and tackle any underperformance.
- Throughout the school, there is a team of committed teaching assistants whose members ably support teachers. Their support and interventions make valuable contributions to the quality of learning and the resulting improvements in pupils' progress.
- Pupils with SEND receive additional support in small groups. The leader for SEND provision works closely with teachers to carefully review each pupil's progress. This results in effective planning for pupils' next steps and they make good progress from their starting points.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Pupils enjoy their phonics sessions and use their knowledge and skills to read unfamiliar and difficult words.
- The handwriting and presentation of a small number of pupils across the school are not consistently neat or in fluent and joined-up script. Consequently, they do not write as

quickly as they could and this slows their progress, as their work is not systematically laid out in their books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff are effective in promoting the school's vision of 'building upon individual strengths and talents' in lessons and in their interactions with pupils. As a consequence, pupils learn to be confident, to persevere, to be humorous when appropriate and to learn from their mistakes.
- Pupils feel that they can approach staff with any worries they may have. This is vital for those who come from complex backgrounds. Pupils succeed as result of the support they receive for their emotional well-being from staff and adults. They describe how staff follow up on any personal issues they have faced. The result is that pupils are confident and resilient.
- The broad range of visitors and visits provide pupils with a rich experience of the world beyond the school. Many of the events link directly to the curriculum topic being covered and provide a strong cultural, social or scientific context for the learning that is going on in the classroom. Many of the activities – such as the visit to Pudding Lane in London as part of their history topic 'The Great Fire of London' – help to develop pupils' understanding of risk and how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils have access to a wide range of enrichment activities, including sports clubs and clubs for expressive arts. The number of pupils taking part in these activities has risen over time.
- Pupils take part in a range of activities as a whole school – such as participation in the music festival and pantomime – which broaden their cultural experiences. Pupils told the inspectors how much they enjoy the school and how appreciative they are of the opportunities that it provides.
- Pupils understand how important it is to accept people as individuals and they explain how 'everyone is treated the same'. They understand how pupils in their classes differ from each other and are accepting of each other's needs.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. They are able to describe how to keep themselves safe when out of school and when online.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and behaviour of this type is acted upon swiftly and decisively by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Classroom atmospheres are harmonious. Pupils listen carefully, give considered responses when answering questions and remain focused when asked to work on their own. Occasionally, a few pupils become easily distracted. However, when this happens,

staff skilfully manage to regain their attention.

- Pupils' behaviour outside of lessons is good. Their cheerful greetings and good manners show their respect for adults and for each other.
- The school manages very well the occasional challenging behaviour from some pupils who have behavioural difficulties. The considerable impact of the school's strategies can be seen in the sustained progress these pupils make and in the absence of any negative effect on the progress of other pupils.
- The attendance of pupils has steadily improved, even though it is below the national average. The school carefully monitors attendance for specific groups of pupils and works closely with families and outside agencies. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years and the few temporary exclusions are only used as a last resort.
- The majority of parents and all staff who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaires agreed that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. Pupils told inspectors that incidents of misbehaviour are infrequent and that staff respond appropriately. School records confirm this to be the case. Records also show that there is a small group of pupils who sometimes do not adhere to the school's rules. However, as a direct result of support from staff, their behaviour has noticeably improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders have successfully addressed previous underachievement and have ensured that pupils make good progress during their time at the school.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in reading and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average in key stage 1. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in writing was below the national average.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported and, as a result, progress well against their individual targets. They make good progress from their starting points.
- The attainment of pupils who qualify for the pupil premium funding is improving. Gaps between the attainment of these pupils and that of their peers are diminishing. Leaders check more carefully the impact of provision for these pupils.
- Outcomes in phonics are consistently strong. The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is in line with the national average.
- Pupils in all year groups are developing their knowledge across a range of subjects other than English and mathematics. Evidence gathered on inspection – including the school's own progress data and work in pupils' books – indicates that outcomes for pupils currently in the school continue to be good.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress. This is because their learning needs are identified and addressed well so that they settle quickly.

Early years provision

Good

- The leader responsible for the early years is knowledgeable and has a clear vision for making further improvements to the setting. She has high expectations for all children, including those with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and shares these expectations with all staff.
- Staff work closely as a team and support each other very well. The leader carefully assesses their training needs and ensures that staff develop the skills they need to be effective.
- Almost all children enter Nursery without having experienced any other childcare settings. On entry, their language skills and their understanding of the world are frequently below those typical for their age. The majority of children, including those with SEND and disadvantaged children, make good progress and go on to achieve well.
- As a result of good teaching, children make strong progress during their time in early years and the proportion achieving a good level of development is in line with the national average. The school's assessment information shows that a higher proportion of children are confidently on track to achieve a good level of development this year. The proportion of children who make rapid progress is increasing.
- Staff know the children well and they take every opportunity to develop children's language skills. Staff encourage them to work and play in pairs and in groups. Highly effective teaching assistants support children's learning and progress. There is no time wasted and no opportunity to learn is passed up. However, the outdoor continuous learning provision sometimes does not offer sufficiently challenging learning opportunities because of its layout and resources. This means that, sometimes, children do not experience the same quality of rich learning opportunities as in the classroom.
- Staff make regular, detailed assessments of children's skills, knowledge and understanding. These assessments are used to plan activities that build on what children know.
- Children listen carefully to adults and each other. During this inspection, children were seen paying close attention during a phonics lesson in a Reception class. They demonstrated a good understanding of sounding out words while describing the patterns they were finding within the spelling of these different words.
- Children have a clear understanding of the expectations for their behaviour and move between activities safely and purposefully. They conduct themselves well at all times and work well together.
- Children are motivated and active learners whose confidence and relationships with adults show that they feel safe. All of the early years welfare requirements are met. Parents feel their children are safe at school and are positive about the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	101210
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	10054353

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs	Karen Noble and Fatimah Shafiq
Executive headteacher	Jacqui Barnard
Telephone number	020 8270 4448
Website	www.marksgate-i.bardaglea.org.uk/
Email address	office@marksgate-i.bardaglea.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2016

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection in September 2016, the school has had several changes in staffing and leadership.
- Marks Gate Infants' School is larger than the average-sized infant school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background, with pupils from any other White background forming the next sizeable ethnic group.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classrooms alongside school leaders, and additionally observed intervention groups.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, teachers and groups of pupils. Inspectors met with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and with the school improvement adviser from the local authority.
- The inspectors worked in partnership with the school's senior leaders when analysing information about the school. The inspectors looked at pupils' outcomes, the school's evaluation of its own performance, minutes from governing body meetings, the school development plan and monitoring and evaluation records. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also checked.
- The inspectors walked around the school with pupils to find out more about their work from displays and extra-curricular activities. Inspectors interviewed groups of children from across the school to determine their views on behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in the playground at playtime and in the lunch hall. They listened to pupils read and looked at work in pupils' books, alongside senior leaders.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents by analysing the 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as speaking informally to parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the views of seven staff who responded to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Danvir Visvanathan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Bryant	Ofsted Inspector
Rani Karim	Ofsted Inspector

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