

Finchley and Acton Yochien School

6 Hendon Avenue, Finchley, London N3 1UE
Playing Field, Queens Drive, London W3 0HT

Inspection dates

9–11 July 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders design the curriculum to give pupils plentiful, rich learning experiences. This makes a strong contribution to pupils' good academic progress and outstanding personal development.
- In all year groups, pupils behave extremely well. They demonstrate behaviours and social skills beyond those typical for their age.
- Members of staff take good care of the pupils and safeguarding is effective.
- Teaching and pupils' outcomes have improved since the previous inspection.
- Teachers plan activities that meet pupils' needs and engage them in their learning. Teachers, who are Japanese, benefit from the occasional opportunities to develop their teaching. However, leaders do not routinely give teachers guidance to improve the quality of their teaching further.
- Pupils make good overall progress across all areas of the curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and children in the early years provision.
- Pupils, all of whom speak English as an additional language, make good progress in learning to read. In so doing, they begin to develop their English vocabulary well. Teachers do not help pupils to develop their spoken English as frequently.
- Leaders have successfully addressed the unmet independent school standards identified at the previous inspection. The school is now compliant with all the regulatory requirements.
- Although staff enjoy working at the school, morale is low. Leaders have not established a clear system to hear and respond to any staff grievances.

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?

- Routinely give teachers specific guidance to improve teaching further.
- Make sure that pupils, including children in the early years provision, practise spoken English regularly.
- Establish effective processes to listen to and address any staff grievances.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards.
- Teachers value the occasional opportunities that leaders create for them to visit local primary schools. This helps them gain knowledge and understanding of the English early years and Year 1 curriculums and teaching methodologies. They successfully adapt and apply English teaching approaches to their teaching in Japanese.
- However, leaders do not routinely check teaching and give teachers guidance on how to enhance their teaching further.
- Pupils study a balanced curriculum that includes art, music, science and mathematics. Leaders focus the Japanese curriculum for younger children on social, emotional and behavioural development in preparation for the rigours of academic learning. Leaders follow the aims of the Japanese curriculum and integrate the requirements of the English curriculum.
- Through the curriculum, pupils access a range of enrichment opportunities. These include visits to local shops and places of interest, as well as museums and stately homes. Pupils learn about different faiths. They visit pupils in local primary schools to learn about British culture. When pupils from local primary schools visit the school in turn, pupils enjoy making new friends and sharing aspects of Japanese culture, such as the tea ceremony. These opportunities make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development and preparation for their future lives in Britain and beyond.
- Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work and their children's experiences.
- Leaders have not established clear systems to hear and respond to any staff grievances, including regarding teacher workload.

Governance

- The sole proprietor is responsible for the governance of the school. He meets regularly with the school's senior leaders, who share information with him about the school's work. He occasionally visits the school and delivers one-off workshops for pupils, on science, for instance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that staff understand current statutory safeguarding guidance. The designated safeguarding leader translates safeguarding guidance and provides staff with useful pictorial prompts so that the Japanese-speaking teachers have full access to guidance documents that are originally written in English.
- Senior leaders attend regular safeguarding training at the two local authorities in which the school sites are located.
- In this small school, staff work closely with families and have regular opportunities to

Speak with parents. They are alert and raise any safeguarding or welfare concerns that may arise.

- Leaders ensure that pupils learn, in an age-appropriate way, about risk and how to keep themselves safe. For instance, a police officer ran a workshop to teach pupils what to do should they become lost.
- The school publishes its safeguarding policy, in English, on its website. The published version is out of date. Owing to technical difficulties, leaders are unable to upload the latest version, which meets current government guidance. Hard copies, however, are available from the school office.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is effective and supports pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers use the early years framework and the national curriculum for Year 1 effectively to plan learning and check on pupils' progress. Teachers organise activities that meet pupils' needs and hold their interest. Teachers' liberal use of praise and encouragement motivates pupils to learn well.
- Teachers and support staff have good working relationships with the pupils. They have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and reinforce good routines. As a result, pupils make good use of lesson time and work hard.
- Teachers ask pupils probing questions, which helps them to deepen their thinking. They encourage pupils to think about and revise previous learning, giving them the foundations for new knowledge and understanding.
- Additional adults give pupils extra help to catch up when they fall behind. Acting on the guidance of external specialists, teachers and teaching assistants tailor their support for pupils with SEND.
- Specialist teachers of English help pupils to read in English and increase their vocabulary. Japanese teachers focus on developing pupils' Japanese vocabulary. They read both English and Japanese books to pupils to develop their love of reading. In English lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise speaking in full sentences. This slows their progress in developing their spoken English.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils interact with each other with maturity. Older pupils, for example, enjoy taking turns to be class monitors, taking the register and re-capping the previous day's learning. Pupils show caring attitudes. For instance, they look out for one another and are attentive when a peer is feeling unwell.
- Staff pay much attention to pupils' welfare and emotional well-being. From the earliest years, staff help pupils talk about their feelings. They help those who may feel sad and arrange activities that promote pupils' well-being. During lunchtime, for instance, staff

encourage pupils to sit calmly and listen to music. At other times, pupils do traditional Japanese quiet reflection activities.

- The school helps pupils keep physically fit and healthy. At the start of the day, as in schools in Japan, parents and their children take part in outdoor exercise activity. Pupils learn about healthy eating. The school's canteen provides healthy options. Leaders insist that parents prepare healthy meals for children who bring packed lunches.
- In an age-appropriate way, pupils learn about different kinds of relationships and family structures. They learn about inappropriate physical contact and generally how to keep themselves safe. Pupils get on extremely well with each other and there have been no instances of bullying at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils have exemplary attitudes to learning. They work extremely well in pairs and groups and, from a very young age, they gladly help each other.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and taking part in the range of activities on offer. They attend school very regularly.
- As they move up through the school years, pupils gain in self-confidence. Pupils are proud of their school and look after the environment. They move around the school in a very calm and orderly way. The school's records of incidents of misbehaviour show that pupils conduct themselves impeccably throughout the day.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make strong progress across the range of subjects. This is because they enjoy a broad curriculum, good teaching and effective support.
- From their very low starting points in English, pupils make good progress. They develop basic phonics skills, read simple sentences and increase the breadth of their English vocabulary. Progress in spoken English is not as strong because pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise speaking.
- Pupils make very strong gains in developing their Japanese literacy skills.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress. Leaders work closely with external agencies and therapists. Staff carefully personalise the support for pupils with SEND.
- The school successfully prepares pupils academically, socially and emotionally, for entry into the next phase of education.

Early years provision

Good

- Two-year-old children get off to a good start in their education. Leaders and teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of how young children learn. Children enjoy a range of well-planned activities and access to good resources, both indoors and outdoors. As a result, children make strong progress in their academic learning, and large gains in their social development. Children work patiently together and take turns, for

example to complete a jigsaw puzzle.

- Children enter Nursery and Reception with skills that are typical for their age, including literacy skills in their native language, Japanese. Almost all join early years speaking little or no English. They make good progress and leave Reception well prepared to continue into the school's final year, for six-year-olds.
- Leaders make sure that the early years learning and development requirements, and the safeguarding and welfare requirements, are met. Leaders have established good systems to check on children's progress. Leaders and staff use the information well to adjust teaching and support to meet children's emerging needs and interests.
- Teaching is effective. There is a good balance between child-initiated activities and teacher-led learning. Signage around the school, for example, is in both Japanese and English. The Japanese staff support learning in the formal English lessons, encouraging children to develop their English vocabulary. However, they do not make sure that children routinely practise speaking English.
- Teachers organise a range of exciting activities. They use good-quality resources both indoors and in the large outdoor areas. Throughout the day, the variety of activities keeps children working happily and learning well. For example, following a visit to the Natural History Museum, children made dinosaur eggs and used soy sauce to paint hens' eggs.
- Children's behaviour, attitudes and personal development are excellent. They share equipment, help each other and learn to socialise. Children take responsibility for their own academic and social improvement.
- Children feel safe and secure as they know that adults care and look after them.
- Staff work closely with parents. Leaders have established effective channels of communication between school and home.
- The school meets the independent school standards in relation to the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	131128
DfE registration number	302/6107
Inspection number	10092475

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	Japanese kindergarten school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 6
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Proprietor	Eikoku Maeda Gakuen Group
Chair	Katsutoshi Maeda
Headteacher	Junko Tanabe
Manager	Nikita Phadnavis
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,000 to £9,000
Telephone number	020 8343 2191
Website	www.maedagroup.co.uk/
Email address	info@maedagroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–5 October 2017

Information about this school

- Finchley and Acton Yochien School is a non-selective kindergarten school for boys and girls based on two sites. The school has provision for two-year-olds. The school serves Japanese families temporarily living in London and aims to ensure that pupils are well prepared for entry into Japanese primary education, which starts at age 7. Almost all pupils arrive speaking little or no English.
- The school follows the Japanese curriculum because almost all pupils return to Japan to continue their education. In planning teaching activities, leaders align pupils' work, including in Japanese, to the English early learning goals. The main language used in lessons is Japanese and specialist teachers teach English as an additional language.

- In line with Japanese schools, the school's academic year starts in April. As teachers typically come from Japan on short contracts, half of the current teaching staff are in their first term of teaching in this country. This also means that pupils are at the early stages of their chronological year group, unlike their English peers who are completing their academic year.
- The school occupies a property in Finchley and a modified sports pavilion on a large sports site in Acton. The sites are several miles apart.
- The school has a sole proprietor. It is part of a group that includes a pre-preparatory school in north London and a language school in Brighton.
- The school's previous inspection was in October 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed learning in a range of classrooms, most of which were visited with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised samples of pupils' work. They checked the school's information about pupils' progress.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, manager, other leaders, teachers and other members of staff. Inspectors also met with the proprietor. Inspectors had various informal discussions with pupils during social times and lessons.
- There was only one response to Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. Inspectors did, however, speak with parents at the start of the school day in order to gather their views.
- Inspectors checked documentation, policies and all aspects of the school's work for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Matthews	Ofsted Inspector
Jason Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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