

# Inspection of The Cherry Trees School

68 Campbell Road, Bow, London E3 4EA

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Inspection dates: 24–25 September 2019

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Inadequate**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils told us that they enjoy coming to school. They appreciate getting to know each other well because they work in small classes. We saw that they build strong and trusting relationships with staff.

Teachers choose activities and topics which they think pupils will enjoy. However, what pupils learn is often muddled because the school does not have a clear plan for any of the subjects that pupils study. Teachers' expectations are low. Too often, pupils repeat learning they have done in previous years.

Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in all subjects, including reading. They would like to take part in more activities, such as educational visits, and learn more in subjects such as music.

We experienced the pleasant atmosphere at breakfast time. Pupils like this start of the day. Staff use the time well to settle pupils and prepare them for the day ahead. Pupils feel safe and trust staff to look after them and deal with any problems quickly. We heard from pupils that bullying is not tolerated and that staff manage any incidents well.

Pupils generally behave well but there are times when some pupils become distracted in lessons. This is usually when their work is not demanding enough.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has been through a turbulent period. Leadership arrangements are temporary. There is uncertainty about the school's future. Leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness and have allowed standards to decline.

Pupils do not receive an acceptable quality of education. Pupils do not develop their knowledge and understanding in different subjects, including in art, history and geography. Too often, pupils repeat work and themes unnecessarily and this goes unchallenged by leaders.

Until very recently, staff have not had the training and development they need, particularly in English and mathematics, to improve pupils' learning. Leaders do not draw effectively on staff expertise in different subject areas.

In mathematics, pupils are exposed to a jumbled set of concepts. Teachers do not identify or address important gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers' assessments hold very little value because they are not used to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. During the inspection, older pupils were completing simple calculation activities that they had mastered in previous years.

Leaders do not prioritise reading and teachers do not help pupils learn to read well enough. There are no plans in place to help pupils gain the skills they need to read fluently. Instead, pupils choose books that are often too difficult for them and cause them to struggle. Staff do not do enough to inspire pupils to enjoy reading. Some activities lead to pupils quickly losing interest. The teaching of phonics is not systematic. In some classes, it is not in place at all. Many pupils lack the reading skills they need to access all other aspects of learning. Pupils do not routinely take books home to read.

The school does not provide pupils with a rich and varied range of experiences, including well-planned school trips and visits. Music, for example, is not taught methodically. The short block of music activities offered each year does not give pupils enough opportunities to build the knowledge and skills in music as required by the national curriculum.

There is no programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils do not learn about important topics such as relationships, diversity and equalities. They do not learn about different faiths and religions of the world. Pupils remember workshops and assemblies about some aspects of PSHE, such as road safety. However, these activities are not routinely planned. Leaders do not prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education and for life in modern Britain.

Pupils do not demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning. When activities are not demanding enough, pupils sometimes switch off or distract others. Pupils do not develop high levels of resilience because teachers do not have challenging expectations for what they can achieve.

Staff are responsive to individual pupils' needs. They speak to pupils throughout the day about how to manage their feelings and behaviours. Staff help pupils to deal with minor disputes and to understand how to work together, share and cooperate. Staff use breaktimes and lunchtimes to support pupils' social skills. Pupils enjoy eating their meals with staff and pupils from their classes. Over their time at the school, pupils learn how to understand and manage their feelings.

Staff work together with parents to help pupils engage in school life. Pupils' attendance has improved and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff keep pupils safe. They work well with other professionals, such as social workers, to ensure that families are given the support they need. Staff understand how to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm or abuse. Procedures for reporting concerns are in place, but the system of recording, logging and analysing incidents is inefficient. Leaders have plans in place to introduce a centralised, electronic management system so that the organisation of records improves.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not provide pupils with a suitable curriculum. Subjects are not planned and the sequence of pupils' learning, in all subjects, is not well thought through. Leaders and governors need to ensure that a curriculum is in place for all subjects and covers the full primary age range.
- Leaders must ensure that the curriculum is ambitious for pupils and that teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements are high. Teachers should draw upon the curriculum to set age-appropriate and challenging activities, while using pupils' education, health and care plans to tailor learning to pupils' individual needs.
- The teaching of reading is weak. Phonics is not taught consistently or effectively and many pupils lack the skills needed to read. This also affects their ability to access other curriculum areas. Pupils become disengaged in reading activities because they are presented with books that are too difficult for them. Leaders must improve the teaching of phonics and reading so that all teachers have the skills and expertise to support pupils' reading skills.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are too variable. Teachers do not routinely provide pupils with sufficiently challenging activities and this causes pupils to disrupt others or choose not to complete the work. Leaders need to ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to demonstrate positive attitudes and resilience when faced with challenging learning situations.
- The lack of a PSHE curriculum or planned opportunities for pupils to learn about the world around them means that the promotion of pupils' personal development is weak. Some pupils leave the school without learning about different religions, for example. There is no programme in place to teach pupils about relationships. Too much is left to coincidental conversations between staff and individual pupils, in response to individual situations. Leaders need to make sure that the planned curriculum provides suitable opportunities to support pupils' personal development. They must ensure that pupils experience a rich and varied set of experiences throughout the curriculum, including in subjects such as music and art.
- Leaders' administration of safeguarding records is not well organised. They must implement swiftly their plans for improving the school's systems for the recording and follow-up of concerns.
- The uncertainty around the arrangements for leadership of the school should be resolved at the earliest opportunity to bring about rapid improvements to the quality of education.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131608
<b>Local authority</b>	Tower Hamlets
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110377
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	18
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Conor Magill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Iain Pearson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thecherrytreesschool.co.uk">www.thecherrytreesschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18–19 March 2015

## Information about this school

- The Cherry Trees School is a special school which caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The interim headteacher, who was previously the deputy headteacher, has been in post for one year. The previous headteacher left the school, after a period of absence, in July 2019. Two members of staff have taken on additional roles to support the interim headteacher.

## Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- We met with the interim headteacher and other members of staff, including the

designated safeguarding lead and the school business manager.

- We met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. We met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection focused deeply on reading, mathematics and science. We met with curriculum leaders, made visits to lessons and looked at pupils' work. We spoke with pupils and other staff and scrutinised documentation related to the curriculum.
- We scrutinised the single central record of staff suitability checks and met with a range of staff to discuss safeguarding arrangements. We looked at incident records and pupils' individual behaviour plans.
- We observed pupils at breaktimes. We held informal discussions with staff and pupils. We reviewed minutes of governing body meetings and documents related to school improvement planning.

### **Inspection team**

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Shaun Dodds

Ofsted Inspector

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