

Inspection of Old Palace Primary School

St Leonard's Street, Bow, London E3 3BT

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This inclusive school celebrates difference and promotes diversity. Pupils value the school's ethos. As one pupil typically commented, 'Learning about others makes us a tolerant society.'

Pupils are kept safe. If they have any worries, they can share these in the 'talktime box'. Staff listen to and support pupils well. They manage any concerns effectively, including those related to bullying. If any bullying does occur, it is dealt with quickly.

Adults have high expectations of pupils. They apply the behaviour policy consistently. The school is purposeful and calm. Pupils are polite, respectful and considerate of the needs of others. In class, adults foster a positive environment in which pupils are very keen to learn. Older pupils model good behaviour for younger pupils. Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary.

The ambitious curriculum enables pupils to achieve well. Leaders provide pupils with a wide variety of enrichment opportunities which bring learning to life. For example, pupils visit museums, galleries, places of worship and West End theatres. Following a visit to the church, pupils spoke knowledgeably about the concept of 'Jesus being the bread of life'. In Years 3, 4 and 5, pupils relish residential visits to different locations within the Essex countryside.

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

Leaders plan and deliver an ambitious curriculum. They have thought carefully about what subject content pupils should learn and in what order. The curriculum from Reception to Year 6 is well organised and leaders check how well pupils learn across subjects.

Teachers regularly check on pupils' learning. They make sure that pupils recap and reinforce what they have been taught previously before moving on to more demanding content. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. Staff make suitable adaptations to meet pupils' needs. Staff ensure that individual plans for pupils with SEND include achievable targets. This helps these pupils to access and learn the same curriculum as others.

The curriculum is planned so that pupils' language develops securely over time. For example, children in Reception learned and practised vocabulary related to the transport topic in readiness for a visit to the Transport Museum. Pupils continue to build up a rich vocabulary as they move up through the school. Pupils' work reflects their subject knowledge well. Their accurate use of subject-specific words for example when writing about life during the Stone Age, demonstrated their knowledge confidently.

Leaders place great importance on pupils learning to read. They provide pupils with high-quality books which link with their learning. Staff routinely read stories and talk to pupils about books to develop their love of reading. Children start to learn phonics from the beginning of their Reception Year. Staff check what pupils have remembered. They give them lots of practise to reinforce their understanding. Most pupils learn to read with increasing fluency and accuracy. At the start of this academic year, leaders introduced a new phonics programme. In a few instances, staff subject knowledge in phonics is not strong. This affects how well they support pupils to develop their reading. Occasionally, pupils' reading books are not well matched to the sounds that they know. Sometimes, pupils move on to the next book before they are ready to do so. Leaders are prioritising further training for staff to ensure that the new phonics programme is embedded.

Pupils are attentive, highly reflective and fully engage in their learning. Children in Reception are especially good at listening carefully to adults and following routines. They are highly motivated and focus for long periods on their chosen activities. The curriculum in the early years is exceptionally well planned and delivered, including in early reading. As a result, children are prepared very effectively for their learning later on in the school.

Leaders provide pupils with a wealth of opportunities to broaden their interests beyond the taught curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to develop a strong sense of democratic principles, for example through the process of electing school councillors. Pupils take their roles and responsibilities seriously, and are keen to develop their leadership skills and qualities. Sports ambassadors proactively support and encourage pupils to participate in sporting activities in the playground. This is typical of the positive contributions that pupil leaders make to school life. Leaders' work to promote pupils' wider development encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles and to understand modern British society.

Most parents and carers are complimentary about the school's work. Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for parents to engage in the life of the school. A few parents said they would like some aspects of the school to improve, such as communication. Leaders have identified this and are taking action.

Staff are positive about working in the school and said that leaders are highly supportive. Teachers at the beginning of their careers benefit from the support provided by leaders. The governing body is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and priorities for development. They visit the school to make checks on the curriculum. Pupils are at the heart of all decisions governors make.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is high on the agenda of all staff. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to recognise the signs of abuse or harm. They take prompt and effective action when concerns are raised. If leaders think a pupil might be at risk of harm,

they are tenacious and determined in securing support. Safeguarding leaders work in close partnership with the school-based pastoral team and external agencies, for example to support good attendance. The governing body assures itself that safeguarding is effective. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe at school, at home and online. They spoke positively about the support available to them in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, in key stage 1 and in Year 3, staff subject knowledge of the school's phonics programme is not strong. Weaker readers do not routinely have books matched to the sounds they know and are moved on to new books before they are ready. As a result, a few pupils struggle to read with confidence, accuracy and fluency. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the subject knowledge to enable them to teach phonics effectively, and provide pupils with reading books that correspond closely to pupils' phonic stage.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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

Unique reference number	100892
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10255336
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Natalie Davis
Headteacher	Gary Palmer
Website	www.oldpalaceprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 July 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, teachers and support staff. An inspector met with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history, religious education, computing and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to

teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of their work. In addition, for the early reading deep dive, an inspector heard a sample of pupils read.

- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum, looked at pupils' work and visited some lessons in other subjects.
- An inspector reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in their responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke with pupils about school life and with staff to discuss their well-being and workload.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits, at breaktime and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Rebekah Iiyambo, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Neary	Ofsted Inspector

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