

Inspection of George Mitchell School

Farmer Road, Leyton, London E10 5DN

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high expectations for pupils and want them to do well. This ambition can be seen in the secondary phase, for example, through the rise in the proportion of pupils who are studying the subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate.

George Mitchell School is calm and orderly, for example corridors are safe spaces, where pupils move quietly from one lesson to another. Pupils are polite and friendly; most behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.

Staff build positive relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to feel safe at school. Pupils say that there are adults that they can approach should they have any worries or concerns. Staff are quick to respond to any incidents such as bullying, so that these can be resolved effectively. Pupils also support each other, through initiatives such as the Year 11 'friends against bullying (FAB)' group or the Year 6 ambassadors.

Staff in the primary phase offer pupils a range of exciting clubs and projects, for example, involving performing arts and languages. Many of these are organised in partnership with external providers. Leaders have rightly identified that secondary-age pupils would benefit from a wider range of clubs and activities.

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

Leaders know their school well. They take effective action where pupils have not been achieving as well as they should. In mathematics, for example, pupils consistently made above average progress by the end of Year 11 in each of the three years before the pandemic. This continued in 2022. However, pupils' progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6 was below average. Leaders responded by making significant improvements to the primary mathematics curriculum. These improvements included the provision of training for teachers and new resources. While there is still work to do, teachers now explain and model concepts more effectively. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are more confident in using their knowledge to solve mathematical problems.

Leaders have made sure that pupils study a broad curriculum. Staff across the primary and secondary phases work together when thinking about what they want pupils to learn as they move from one year to the next. However, in a few subjects, leaders' curriculum thinking, particularly as pupils move from the primary to the secondary phase, is not precise enough. As a result, pupils do not build up the strong body of knowledge that they should.

Pupils in the early years get off to a strong start with their education, including in learning to read. Staff use their expertise well, for example, in selecting books carefully to help pupils practise their phonics. Pupils make great gains in their phonics knowledge by the end of Year 1. In Years 3 to 6, pupils enjoy their 'reading

bug' challenges. They are increasingly confident when talking about plots, characters and sharing their reflections on what they have read. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 receive effective support to help them become fluent readers.

Most teachers know their subjects well, they present new information clearly. The outdoor environment in the early years has a wide range of resources that are used well by adults to help children with their learning. However, sometimes teachers do not check that pupils have understood important subject content or adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs. When this happens, pupils struggle to remember content or to make connections between one topic and another.

Oversight of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has been strengthened. Pupils' needs are identified accurately, and staff give these pupils the support they need to access the curriculum. Leaders are currently working to further improve the support for pupils with SEND in the primary phase.

Most staff feel well supported by leaders in applying the school's behaviour policy effectively. Most pupils want to learn, and low-level disruption is rare. Occasionally, pupils lack enthusiasm for learning. This tends to be when pupils have gaps in their knowledge and struggle to complete the set work. Children in the early years have built up some strong routines, for example in settling quickly during 'carpet time'.

Leaders have created a well-organised personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme that helps pupils to learn about topics, such as online safety and consent in an age-appropriate way. The school's approach to careers education is well established. Pupils, including those with SEND, are helped to find the right next step when the time comes to leave school at the end of Year 11.

Leaders have made many changes this school year, including in governance. There is now a greater focus on governors challenging school leaders to test out what they have been told. The trust has also provided leadership support, particularly in the primary phase. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being. The members of staff spoken to by inspectors, including those new to teaching, feel very well supported. However, a few members of staff feel that leaders could still do more to think about their well-being when making decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that any concerns about pupils' well-being are dealt with quickly. They have a strong understanding of the external support available in the local area. Staff reach out to external agencies to provide support quickly. Pupils are cared for well.

The PSHE education programme helps to educate pupils about how to look after themselves and manage risks, including to their physical safety, with topics, such as

knife crime. Leaders organise one-to-one support to help pupils learn from any incidents where they may have behaved in a way that may affect their own safety or that of their peers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not given enough thought to the component knowledge that they want pupils to learn and connect, particularly as they move through from the primary to the secondary phase of education. As a result, pupils are not building up the strong body of knowledge that they should be. Leaders need to finalise their curriculum thinking in these subjects.
- In a few subjects and phases, there is some variation in how well staff deliver their subject curriculums. For example, some staff do not check that pupils have a secure understanding of the required component knowledge. When this happens, pupils develop misconceptions and/or gaps in their learning. Leaders should review their training to help teachers make better use of assessment, so that they can more effectively adapt their teaching to support pupils to know more and remember more.

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	145106
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10268420
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1033
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Saadat Mubashar
Headteacher	Benita Simmons (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.georgemitchellschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- George Mitchell School converted to become an academy in January 2019. When its predecessor school, also called George Mitchell School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The executive headteacher started at the school in September 2022.
- The school is part of the Partnership Learning Trust. The trust is providing additional support to the school, for example, through the work of the interim head of primary and the director for school improvement.
- The school currently uses three registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and other senior staff. Inspectors also met with leaders representing the trust and local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, music and physical education. During each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons across both primary and secondary phases of the school, spoke to teachers and pupils about their learning. Inspectors also reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders, pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in a range of other subjects across both the primary and secondary phases of the school.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour. They reviewed a wide range of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, case studies, attendance and behaviour information. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, staff and pupils to help evaluate the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors also considered replies to Ofsted Parent View and the online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Russell Bennett	His Majesty's Inspector
Stephen Hall	Ofsted Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector

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