

Inspection of Highbury Quadrant Primary School

Highbury New Park, Islington, London N5 2DP

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at this community school. They enjoy their learning as well as taking part in the many school trips. Generally, relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Leaders know their pupils well. They think carefully about their needs and support pupils to take part enthusiastically in lessons.

Leaders have planned for all pupils to learn a broad and ambitious curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders think carefully about what they want pupils to learn. Leaders' work to put their vision into practice is well under way in some subjects. In others, this work is only just starting. This means that the curriculum is not taught consistently well. As a result, pupils do not achieve well across the whole range of subjects studied.

Pupils learn to behave well. They are kind to one another and show respect, regardless of the differences between them. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that adults will help them if they report this or other concerns.

Leaders reward positive behaviour. They teach pupils about being polite and encourage them to be confident about change. For example, Year 6 pupils are supported well to be ready for the forthcoming transition to secondary school. Leaders also provide pupils with the chance to take responsibility, for example by leading fundraising.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all their pupils. They take careful account of where pupils are in their development when they arrive. This is particularly strong in the early years provision. Here, leaders think carefully about how the curriculum supports children to develop the independence, curiosity and social skills needed to learn confidently. Alongside this, children learn and practise important foundational knowledge in all areas of learning. Children are well prepared to make the move to Year 1.

In Years 1 to 6, leaders have developed a broad curriculum. They have made ambitious choices about subject content, incorporating the aims and scope of the national curriculum. However, in a number of subjects, this new approach to the curriculum has only been introduced recently. Teachers' confidence and expertise in developing the curriculum are not secure. Sometimes, they are unsure about how to break new knowledge down to make it easier for pupils to understand and remember. When pupils find it hard to grasp ideas, some teaching responds well, with adaptations made to help pupils overcome barriers successfully and access the learning. This is not consistent. Pupils are not remembering knowledge securely in a range of subjects.

Leaders are aware of the improvements that need to be made. They have already made some important and effective changes, drawing on expertise available within the local authority and other nearby schools. For example, credible actions are being taken to improve pupils' learning in languages. Leaders have also taken effective action to ensure that pupils learn to read fluently. They have invested in a new phonics programme, and they have ensured that teaching staff are well trained to deliver this. Teachers identify which pupils have particular gaps in their knowledge, and they intervene swiftly to address this. For instance, they provide small-group support for pupils who need to revisit and practise sounds. Leaders have also taken steps to ensure that teachers benefit from training to develop their expertise in different subjects. Assessment is regular and effective in reading, but it is less effective in other subjects. In many cases, pupils are left with misconceptions because teaching is not checking for understanding.

Leaders consider thoughtfully how to tailor support to pupils' individual needs and circumstances. The school has a number of pupils with complex SEND, who receive appropriate personalised support with their learning and wider well-being. For example, when concerns arise about attendance, leaders work closely with families to ensure that absence is reduced. Pupils also receive strong support to help them develop positive attitudes to learning and follow classroom routines.

Pupils enjoy most of their lessons. Most pupils try hard in class and meet the high expectations of staff. There is occasional disruption and boisterousness, but in general, staff address this swiftly. The school is a happy and harmonious place.

Leaders offer a wide set of opportunities to all pupils. They organise frequent trips, including to theatres, museums and sporting events. They have devised a well-planned and sequenced curriculum for personal development, running from Nursery to Year 6. Pupils learn to live healthy lives. They explore different identities and learn to be respectful and tolerant of others. Pupils enjoy attending after-school clubs such as multi-sports.

Leaders and governors are dedicated to the pupils and school, and they care deeply about the community the school serves. They work closely with families.

Staff, including support staff, appreciate the opportunities they receive for further development. They feel well supported.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school and carry out their roles conscientiously. They are strengthening their oversight of the curriculum, particularly how well the changes made are bringing about improvements to pupils' learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are knowledgeable. They ensure that staff are trained to recognise and report need. Leaders consider the possible risks to pupils locally, and they ensure that the curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe.

Leaders carry out employment checks to ensure that only suitable staff are employed by the school.

Leaders keep clear records and ensure that they make referrals to local agencies where this is needed. They also provide help for pupils and families on the school site.

Pupils trust adults to help them and they are happy to report concerns by talking to staff or using the 'time to talk' box.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many subjects, teaching is not drawing consistently well on leaders' curriculum thinking. Sometimes, teaching is not focused enough on the knowledge that pupils need to learn. Series of lessons are not planned and sequenced to help pupils learn and remember the knowledge that leaders expect. Leaders should continue their work to improve how well the curriculum is delivered, ensuring that teachers know how to help pupils grasp and remember key ideas in a subject securely.
- Teachers do not systematically check how well pupils have understood subject content. This means that some pupils retain misconceptions and are not able to move on in their learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers routinely check how well pupils have learned key concepts and that they respond to this so that all can move on confidently in their learning.
- While pupils access a broad curriculum, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not had a coherent experience in learning a modern foreign language. This has affected pupils' progression. Leaders need to complete their plans to ensure that pupils access a well-delivered and coherent curriculum in this subject.

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	100431
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10287175
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Terry Stacey
Headteacher	Terri Higgins
Website	https://www.highburyquadrantprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has recently undergone two restructures to accommodate falling pupil numbers. At the time of the last inspection, there were two forms of entry in each year group. This was reduced last year. In January of this year, the structure was changed again so that, apart from Year 6, there is one form of entry per year group. From September 2023, the school will operate fully as a one-form-of-entry primary school.
- The school has a provision for two-year-old children within the Nursery class.
- Leaders do not make use of 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.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects. This included visits to early years and a discussion with the early years leader.
- To inspect safeguarding, leaders reviewed policies and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. They also reviewed the single central record and records of referrals made to the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to the Ofsted surveys from staff, pupils, and parents and carers.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and reviewed records related to behaviour and attendance. They also observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils about the provision for personal development.
- Inspectors spoke to school leaders and governors about their plans for the school, as well as reviewing related documents such as the school improvement plan. They also spoke with the school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Alice Clay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rekha Bhakoo	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Hook	Ofsted Inspector

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