

Inspection of Columbia Primary School

Columbia Road, Bethnal Green, London, Avon E2 7RG

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff and pupils describe the school as being like a family. Many, including parents, feel a strong sense of community. The school's welcoming ethos contributes to pupils feeling valued and secure. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who are fully included in the life of the school.

There is a strong culture of respect at the school, where staff encourage pupils to accept differences in people. Pupils are kept safe in school by caring adults. They are motivated to do their best because teachers have high expectations of what they can do. Roles such as being a member of the 'Friendship Squad', supporting other pupils at breaktimes, and being on the school council help pupils to contribute to the school community.

Staff make sure that they deal with any pupil concerns promptly. Pupils are very confident that staff will not tolerate unkind behaviour. Parents and carers value the work of the school. One parent summed up the views of many by describing the school as 'a wonderful neighbourhood school'.

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

Leaders are ambitious for what they want pupils to achieve. They have developed the school's curriculum well over time. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning in these subjects. For example, they talked confidently and in detail about their learning in reading and mathematics. Leaders have recently been developing a new approach to teaching mathematics. They have ensured a consistent approach to the teaching of important mathematical concepts. However, in some subjects, teaching does not build effectively on what pupils know and understand, including how content builds sequentially from the early years. This leads to gaps in the knowledge and understanding of some pupils in these subjects.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Leaders focus on teaching pupils the phonics knowledge they need to become fluent readers. This begins in Nursery with stories and rhymes. Pupils in early years and Years 1 and 2 learn phonics every day. Staff build on pupils' phonics knowledge progressively over time. They teach phonics consistently. Pupils read books matched to the sounds they know. Leaders have ensured that there are clear systems for identifying pupils who need help with learning to read. Pupils who need to catch up receive targeted support to help them to become fluent readers. Adults promote a love of reading across the school. They introduce pupils to, and read to them, a rich and diverse range of texts.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to access the curriculum, including the curriculum for reading. Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly. Staff adapt and support pupils with SEND well.

Relationships between staff and pupils are kind and supportive. Routines are clear and established quickly. Pupils speak to each other in a respectful way. They know they can talk to a trusted adult if they have any concerns. Pupils are supported by staff to make positive choices. As such, there is rarely any disruption in lessons. Behaviour is consistently impressive.

From the early years onwards, staff establish positive working relationships between home and school. Leaders create routines from day one at the school, establishing high expectations for children. Pupils learn why it is important to show respect for others, including different lifestyles and looking after the environment. Leaders have given careful and detailed thought to the personal development experiences on offer to pupils through the curriculum. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions. They have a strong understanding of the fundamental British values. Pupils talk with maturity about differences between religious celebrations and worship. They have a secure understanding of how to have a healthy and positive relationship. Pupils engage meaningfully with the local community and support local charity fundraising. They benefit from a diverse and wide range of visits and clubs. This enhances their learning and supports them to develop talents and interests that they can follow outside and beyond school.

Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development in the school. They are committed to the community ethos of the school. Governors understand their specific roles, including in relation to safeguarding. Staff training is prioritised by leaders. Staff are happy and proud to work at the school. They appreciate how leaders are mindful of workload and prioritise the well-being of staff and pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A culture of safeguarding pervades all aspects of school life. This has been developed through strong relationships with families in the school community. Staff are very aware of local safeguarding risks, including through regular and detailed safeguarding training. Staff are clear on how, and when, to report concerns. Leaders act upon these concerns swiftly and effectively. They work with external professionals, when necessary, to get support for pupils and families.

Leaders have given careful thought to ensuring that teachers give pupils the knowledge they need to stay safe. For example, pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teaching does not build on what pupils know and remember. This includes content that does not build sequentially from the early years. As a result, some pupils do not consistently deepen their knowledge and, consequently, have gaps in their understanding. The school should make sure that all staff have the expertise to build on pupils' prior knowledge precisely and progressively from the early years onwards.

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	100897
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10227239
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	437
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stephanie Collins
Headteacher	Oliver Woodward
Website	www.columbiaprimarieschool.org
Date of previous inspection	5 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently 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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers. They also met with the special educational needs coordinator and early years leader and carried out joint lesson visits. They also met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing, science and music. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at

curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult and visited reading and phonics lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to members of the safeguarding team and considered documentation about safeguarding. They also spoke to pupils and staff about safeguarding and behaviour and observed pupils' behaviour around the school.

Inspection team

Phil Garnham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Russell Bennett	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Bailey OBE	Ofsted Inspector
David Bryant	Ofsted Inspector

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