

Inspection of St John's Highbury Vale CofE Primary School

Conewood Street, London N5 1DL

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 September 2023

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

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 nine 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 graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. 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?

Pupils feel happy and secure in this school. This is because adults keep them safe. Pupils know and follow the routines that help them to move safely around the school. Through an extensive personal development programme, they learn the difference between unkind behaviour and bullying. They feel well equipped and well supported by adults to deal with both on the rare occasions they happen. Overall, pupils are calm, confident and peaceful in lessons and at breaktimes.

Pupils are expected to work hard and take responsibility for their learning. This means they achieve well, including most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

There are many leadership opportunities for pupils. They take these seriously and habitually act responsibly. For example, a group of pupils independently organise the music and set-up for collective worship. Others are class or sports leaders. They do jobs such as ring the bell at the end of break, organise competitions and represent the pupil voice.

The school has a strong sense of community. This stems from the small setting, strong parental involvement and links to the church. Events such as picnics, 'French Day' and the Easter bonnet parade provide opportunities to bring everyone together. Pupils enjoy learning about each member of their community and celebrate their differences.

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

The school has implemented a broad and balanced curriculum that matches what is expected nationally. Most subjects have been set out with high ambition to ensure that pupils learn the appropriate building blocks of knowledge at the appropriate stage. This ensures that pupils can consolidate and apply this knowledge as it becomes more complex. For example, pupils in Reception learn to make sounds and understand instructions phonetically before they start formal phonics. Similarly, they sort shapes according to the number of sides they have. This prepares them for more in-depth mathematical awareness of shape and geometry later. The curriculum is more secure and embedded in some subjects than others. Leaders are in the process of reviewing and updating a small number of subjects to ensure consistency across all areas.

In most cases, new knowledge is presented clearly. Tasks typically enable pupils to know and remember more over time. Additionally, teachers regularly check to see if pupils have learned what is intended and take appropriate steps to address misconceptions.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly, and the school ensures that the appropriate agencies and specialist support are accessed in a timely fashion. However, the

adaptations made in class are not routinely well matched to the needs of pupils with SEND. This can occasionally lead to pupils having some gaps to their knowledge.

The school has a well-established and approved phonics programme in place. Leaders ensure it is delivered consistently. They also regularly check what pupils know and use additional support to help them catch up if they fall behind. The sharp focus on early reading means pupils quickly gain the skills they need to become confident, fluent readers.

Behaviour is generally calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and their teachers. On the few occasions when behaviour needs addressing by staff, pupils quickly correct their conduct, and learning continues with little disruption.

The school has ensured that pupils have access to a very stimulating and enriching wider curriculum. They learn about different cultures and faiths, protected characteristics, equal opportunities and the full range of family structures and relationships. Pupils are taught how to be healthy in mind and body and how to keep themselves safe online. They contribute to their community by regularly raising money for charity and participating in projects that support the environment. The school arranges many visits, including to places like the Houses of Parliament, the zoo and a range of museums and galleries. Pupils also benefit from participating in numerous sporting activities and inter-school competitions. Leaders take steps to ensure that all pupils benefit from this exceptionally well-considered programme of activities.

Leaders, including governors, have a strong understanding of the challenges faced by the school. There is a very new leadership team in place. These new leaders have moved quickly to get to know the pupils and their families. While they have already had a positive impact on the education provided, many of their improvements need time to embed. Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Parents and carers say that communication is an embedded strength of the school and changes in leadership have not altered this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subjects are not as consistently well structured and sequenced as others. This means pupils are not securing all the necessary component knowledge into their long-term memory before tackling more complex ideas. The school should ensure that all subject curriculums clearly identify the key knowledge the school wants pupils to secure and at what stage.

- Adaptations for pupils with SEND are not routinely meeting their needs. This means that some pupils are not accessing the curriculum as well as they could. The school must ensure that staff consistently make appropriate adaptations to allow all pupils to access the curriculum.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	100440
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10255353
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Hinton
Headteacher	Tonnie Read
Website	www.stjhv.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 and 28 March 2014 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school, sponsored by the London Diocesan Board of Schools. The last section 48 inspection of the school was in May 2019.
- There is a daily breakfast club managed by the school.
- There is an after-school 'Kids Club'.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, computing and history. To do this, they met with subject leaders, had discussions with staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. Other subjects were considered as part of this inspection.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, a selection of subject leaders, teachers, and support staff.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including the co-chairs of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from the local authority and the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The views of pupils, parents, and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Una Buckley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Shaun Dodds

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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