Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Poplar Primary School

Poplar Road South, Merton Park, London SW19 3JZ

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 November 2024

Outcome

Poplar Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is driven by its mission statement for pupils to be 'ready, respectful and safe'. Pupils take part in a wide range of enrichment activities to gain valuable life experiences. They take part in trips, clubs and workshops and hold various leadership responsibilities. This is in addition to listening to visitors and authors and taking part in competitions and charity drives. These activities contribute to pupils feeling happy and confident at this school.

Pupils are safe and attend school very well. Conduct around the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and courteous. They are motivated to learn in class. Children in the early years develop good social skills and learn to play together cooperatively.

The school provides a broad and enriched education. This begins in the early years, where secure foundations are built. Pupils make strong progress through the curriculum and often achieve very well. This is because the school has high academic ambitions for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), where needs are identified accurately and with precision. Pupils want to learn and enjoy their learning.

The school works well with families. It has built a strong community ethos. Parents and carers speak of the nurturing environment and warm pastoral care provided to their children.

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

Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum. The school has identified the knowledge that pupils will learn with care. This is sequenced in a logical order. Enrichment activities underpin

work in the classroom, which makes learning memorable. For example, older pupils go on trips to museums to support their learning of World War II. Younger pupils go on tours of central London to provide inspiration for self-titled 'books' of their own adventures in the city.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and think carefully about what pupils learn and when. Activities build in challenge. They are clearly explained and modelled by teachers. For example, in art lessons, pupils view famous portraits and are provided with templates to help them work out proportions and alignment. This methodical approach, which is seen across subjects, means that pupils, including those with SEND, develop a secure body of knowledge.

Pupils are often able to remember their prior learning, such as the chambers of the heart in science or different forms of protest in history. However, the school does not routinely check that pupils have understood content before moving on. This means, at times, some pupils who may not choose to participate do not secure the knowledge they are taught. Likewise, pupils do not have regular opportunities to reflect or act on feedback provided by teachers, which would help them to secure their knowledge.

The school strengthens its educational offer through an innovative outdoor curriculum. This is well designed to promote pupils' talk, creativity and problem-solving. Activities and learning are threaded through the curriculum subjects with additional enrichment opportunities. These include use of the nature zone for science and making nettle tea, which links to pupils' work in English based on the book 'The Wolf's Footprint'.

Pupils are excited to work on the school allotment. The produce grown is made into chutneys, jams and dried herbs and sold in the school's farmers' market. The school has also built extensive links with the community. This includes tree planting, working with the local National Trust park and building strong knowledge of the local area. This is evident in pupils' work and their understanding of local history.

Books are the backbone of the curriculum. This begins in early years, where activities revolve around stories. For example, children develop their skills in art by producing bear paintings after reading 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. They practise cutting skills when making bear ears, and the school hosted a teddy bears hospital to learn about keeping healthy. Early readers are supported by the school's phonics programme, which is set out logically to build their knowledge securely. The school identifies those who need additional help quickly. Staff expertly lead support sessions, so pupils learn to read fluently.

Pupils take an active role in the school community through the school council and eco-council. They have opportunities to lead as digital leaders, reading champions and house captains. Pupils develop in confidence and are encouraged to take an interest in wider issues and events. They visit places of worship and have a regular focus on life skills, including etiquette, personal safety and financial awareness, to help prepare them for life in modern Britain. Personal, social, health and economic education is organised thoughtfully. Pupils know how to stay healthy and safe, including online.

In classrooms, pupils are motivated to learn. In the early years, children build up their concentration skills and learn to regulate their emotions. Older pupils are typically respectful and well-mannered. At social times, most pupils play together well and show kindness to each other. At times, younger pupils need reminders about their behaviour and physical play. Attendance is high and the school has developed strong relationships with parents and families to encourage this.

Leaders and staff work together effectively. Staff feel valued and heard. Governors are knowledgeable and take their duty of care seriously. Leaders are committed to driving a culture of ambition.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not consistently check pupils' understanding across subjects. Some pupils may not fully understand new concepts that prepare them for the more complex ideas that come later in the curriculum. The school should ensure that teachers routinely check that pupils' understanding is secure before moving them on to learning more challenging content.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2015.

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	102644
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10345829
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	634
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tara Kent
Headteacher	Elaine Spick
Website	www.poplar.merton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 met with senior leaders, governors, a representative from the local authority, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for school improvement.

- Inspectors took account of the views of pupils, parents and staff, as gathered through discussions and Ofsted's surveys.
- Inspectors checked the school's policies and records, including those related to behaviour and pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff and spoke with pupils during social times. They observed pupils' behaviour across the school, including as they arrived at and left the school.
- 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.

Inspection team

Sarah Saunders, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Neil Harvey	Ofsted Inspector

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