

Ben Jonson Primary School

Harford Street, Stepney, London E1 4PZ

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Strong leadership, effective training, high expectations and rigorous performance management have ensured that teaching is typically good across the school. As a result, the school is improving.
- The leadership team knows that there are still challenges that need to be addressed. Leaders are ambitious and united in tackling them.
- Some leaders and governors are more effective in their leadership, use of assessment information and the tracking of pupils' outcomes.
- Governors and leaders ensure that statutory requirements to keep children safe are effective.
- The school's curriculum is good. It is enriched by visits out of school and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, which pupils value and enjoy.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved over time. Pupils are using and applying their mathematics skills more effectively than previously.
- Teachers know their pupils well. The teachers of older pupils use the information they have about pupils' current abilities to plan and adapt activities that help them achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are positive. They enjoy the wide range of activities provided for them and are keen to learn.
- Parents and pupils are positive about the care, guidance and support provided by staff at the school. Pupils said that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils respond well to the high standards expected of their behaviour, showing care and respect for each other.
- The leadership and teaching in early years have improved to produce better outcomes. Children settle quickly and are already confident to play independently, which helps extend their thinking and understanding.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.
- Strategies to support pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have recently arrived in the country are effective. Their communication skills improve rapidly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve impact on pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - key stage 1 teachers track pupil progress and adapt work with the same precision that is evident in the tracking of the progress of older pupils in the school, so that all pupils make substantial progress
 - leaders, including governors, use assessment information incisively to ensure that priorities in phonics, reading and key stage 1 continue to be addressed quickly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together. They have developed a senior leadership team that is cohesive and ambitious, meeting the challenges of identified priorities.
- Leaders set high expectations for their staff and themselves and are anything but complacent. Teachers value the many opportunities that leaders provide for them to develop their teaching skills. Training sessions and individual coaching have helped to improve their practice, particularly in mathematics. This has ensured that the quality of teaching continues to improve and has a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- The headteacher manages teachers' performance well, and targets are closely matched to the needs of the individual as well as to the school's priorities. As a consequence, the headteacher has challenged the weak teaching in key stage 1 and the early years that led to children underperforming in 2016 and 2017.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. There is a clear rationale for curriculum design. Termly activities are enriched by a number of trips, extra-curricular themed weeks and parents invited to learn with their children in the class. For example, pupils are able to show learning about creativity and expression in the 'Big Draw', when they use a wide range of media to produce informative, vibrant displays across the school.
- Pupils spoke highly of the rich array of opportunities they can take part in during and after the school day. They particularly enjoy the numerous trips that the school arranges to support the curriculum. Year 6 pupils learn how to take responsibility and work collaboratively with their classmates on outdoor residential trips. The youngest children gain confidence when going for walks outside of the school, and others learn about life in the past when visiting the Docklands museum.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted for the pupils through discussion about different faiths that they may encounter in the community as well as cultures and customs beyond Britain. The pupils get involved in community projects, such as collecting food for a local food bank and learning about the recipients of the food and their needs. This helps them to appreciate the needs of those who are less fortunate than themselves.
- Displays around the school show how pupils learn about the world around them, consider local and national issues and develop their understanding of life in modern Britain. They understand democracy and the rule of law from the various positions that pupils are voted into, such as on the school council, and from the agreement of class rules.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sports funding is used well. Pupils have access to a range of sports resources, including specialist coaches during lunchtime and after school, when exercise and team games increase their health and fitness. The engagement of specialist dance coaches to work alongside teachers has increased their confidence to teach PE in the context of cross-curricular work, such as that on the Vikings.

- Strong leadership by the knowledgeable inclusion leader ensures that funding is well spent for the large number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Highly personalised provision and close monitoring of the progress of these pupils and those who speak English as an additional language ensure that teaching and programmes of support are well suited to pupils' needs. These activities have ensured that both these groups of pupils make good progress in line with that of their classmates.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Any barriers to learning are quickly identified, and intervention activities are targeted to close gaps that help them learn. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and other vulnerable pupils make good progress in most year groups.
- Leaders recognise that there is still underachievement in some areas of the school, such as the need for rapid progress at key stage 1. Almost all leaders use assessment and tracking information well.

Governance of the school

- Governors have had many challenges to deal with since the previous inspection, including the appointment of interim and permanent headteachers. They have wisely sought guidance and support from the local authority to ensure that the reputation of the school remains strong in the local community.
- Since the arrival of the current headteacher, governors have gained in confidence and skill. Following an audit and recruitment drive, they now have the necessary range of skills needed to carry out their statutory duties effectively. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities to provide meaningful challenge and support to school leaders. They are committed to the ethos and values of the school.
- Arrangements for the performance management of the staff, including the headteacher, are checked rigorously by governors. This has ensured that teaching that is less than good has been tackled effectively.
- Additional grants for pupil premium, special educational needs and sport are managed efficiently.
- Governors regularly receive updates from staff about subject performance in raising achievement committee meetings, which allows them to keep a close check on what is happening. However, they do not always make effective use of the wide range of assessment information given to them to ensure that standards continue to rise.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils deemed vulnerable by the school receive good-quality support so that they are helped to keep themselves safe.
- The single central record of recruitment checks on staff is up to date and compliant. Well-organised and careful checks are carried out on new members of staff. Governors and leaders adhere well to safer recruitment practices to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.

- Staff receive regular and effective training relating to safeguarding. They are vigilant in referring any concerns about a pupil, and leaders tenaciously follow up any referrals.
- Governors and leaders regularly check on the effectiveness of their procedures to keep children safe.
- The responses from questionnaire surveys of parents indicate that they are happy with safeguarding arrangements. Leaders and governors are creating a safe culture in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The headteacher has placed teaching, learning and assessment at the centre of the school's work. Because of effective support and training, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. One pupil said, 'I came from another school at the start of this year, and at Ben Jonson the teachers really help me when I get stuck. They show me what to do in lots of ways so I really understand.'
- The teaching of mathematics has improved over time. Visits to mathematics classrooms and scrutiny of workbooks show that pupils are increasingly confident in using mathematical reasoning skills to solve problems and to identify errors in their own work. Pupils use resources well to apply their mathematics understanding in practical activities.
- Teachers and other adults provide good examples of how to use specialist subject language correctly. Praise is used constructively to enable pupils to confidently contribute to class discussions. Because of better teaching and high-quality collaborative work, pupils who speak English as an additional language improve their speaking and listening skills and make good progress. All pupils are expected to clarify and explain vocabulary in English lessons.
- Leaders have provided effective training to ensure that teachers use a range of effective strategies for the teaching of reading. For example, teachers weave reading and writing activities across different subjects, which helps pupils to consolidate these skills. Pupils make good use of 'Must Reads' in visually attractive book corners and read at least once a day. They talk confidently and knowledgeably about authors and the books they like to read. This enables them to read confidently and with understanding.
- Pupils persevere well with their writing as a result of carefully planned activities across a range of genres. Working walls are used effectively to enable pupils to check or develop their ideas.
- Most teaching assistants support the needs of pupils well. They encourage pupils to have a go and use questions to extend thinking and assess learning effectively.
- Although key stage 1 teachers use different levels of work, such as 'Tricky, Trickier and Trickiest', they do not always adapt the work precisely enough to enable pupils of different abilities to progress rapidly. Teachers of older pupils are better skilled at tracking pupil progress to help pupils move onto the next steps in their learning.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders promote a strong inclusive culture through their values, aims and ethos. Pupils are keenly aware of how to look after each other and their environment. They show mutual respect and care to those around them.
- Classrooms are purposeful and calm. Throughout the school, there is a clear focus on learning because staff have high expectations. Pupils respond well to this approach by developing very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they like the commendations they earn. They are increasingly reflective and are able to talk about times when they have achieved well and when they need to improve.
- Parents spoken with during the inspection and responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, show that most speak favourably about the school. One parent spoke for many by saying, 'The school is a second home for my children.'
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities from art and film clubs to team activities, such as football, enables pupils to explore an interest in more depth while developing social and teamwork skills.
- Relationships between pupils and adults and among pupils are warm and demonstrate genuine concern and good humour. Pupils are extremely polite and greet adults and each other respectfully.
- Racism and other forms of bullying are rare. Pupils confidently said that they are able to resolve most issues themselves, saying it is called 'conflict resolution'. If any bullying does occur it is dealt with quickly by adults in the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is a harmonious, welcoming and inclusive school.
- Pupils mix easily and well during playtimes and the lunch break. Pupils behave sensibly as they move around the school and they are polite to teachers, visitors and classmates.
- Fixed-period exclusions are very rare and permanent exclusions are non-existent. Pupils are keen to listen and respond willingly to teachers' comments and questions. They enjoy their learning, grow into confident, self-assured members of the school community and take pride in their work.
- Leaders have taken firm and positive steps to improve pupils' attendance, using the statement 'One more day'. Attendance has risen in consecutive years and is now similar to the national average. A small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also have complex medical needs. This has an impact on their attendance rates. Staff work closely with these families to minimise the impact of long-

term absence on their children's learning. The gap in attendance between pupil premium-funded pupils, and those who are not, is closing.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The 2017 results at key stage 2 for reading, writing and mathematics rose compared to those of 2016. Achievement in mathematics is above age-related expectations, addressing previous underperformance. This is also the case for pupils working at greater depth. However, the 2017 key stage 1 results were not as positive as the school had anticipated, particularly in reading and the phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils. This was because the teaching they received was not consistently good.
- In 2017, Year 6 pupils attained standards in reading that were above national expectations, but progress was below national averages. The school's own records show that progress over the year for this group of pupils was strong. Leaders identified this issue quickly and provided training and curriculum modifications to implement a better quality of reading experience for the pupils.
- Recent work to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at key stage 1, has led to a rapid increase in pupils' achievement across a range of subjects and in each year group. Teachers now have a secure understanding of national expectations at the end of key stage 1 to ensure that more pupils can work at these standards. Work in pupils' books and learning observations show that the vast majority of pupils are on track and that achievement is accelerating. This includes vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have now strengthened the teaching of phonics by restructuring the curriculum. Staff are now more confident and effective in helping pupils to improve the fluency and speed of their reading. Evidence from lessons and pupils' books shows that middle-ability pupils are in a better place than those from last year who were not successful in passing the phonics screening check. Current Year 1 pupils respond well to higher levels of challenge and are able to use strings of letters to produce words.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly. The precise and well-chosen support that they receive, through activities such as 'little explorers' and 'bucket time', enables them to make good progress.
- The number of pupils at the school who do not speak English as a first language at home is considerably higher than the national average. Most of these pupils develop good communication skills in English. The pupils who have recently arrived in the country are supported well. Their communication skills improve rapidly.
- The school's own current assessment information shows that in some year groups the gap between disadvantaged pupils, including those who are more able, and their classmates is closing, particularly in Years 2 and 6.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter with skills and attributes that are typically below those expected for their age. In 2017, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was just below average. This represents good progress.
- Early years leadership has improved because identified underperformance from the previous year is being tackled well by ensuring that the curriculum is ambitious and well planned. As a result, children have settled quickly into Reception since they started school.
- Children share and cooperate well. They sustain concentration, focus on the task in hand and attempt tasks independently, for example, when finding resources from across the classroom which were heavier and lighter, using bucket scales.
- Good teaching, perceptive and probing questioning and interventions by staff help children to think about what they are doing and then extend their thinking and understanding further. For example, when children were highly engaged during water play, adult questioning encouraged them to think about what would happen if they used syringes and test tubes to mix colours.
- The leader ensures that teachers and adults demonstrate phonics well, through interesting and engaging activities. Effective support ensures that all children have the opportunity to apply their phonic knowledge with enthusiasm. Current evidence shows that children can read words such as 'web', 'jam', 'zig' and 'zag'.
- Children's language development and communication skills are improved by words and phrases displayed across a range of different learning areas. These are carefully placed close to resources used in both indoor and outdoor activities so that pupils have immediate access to words to use in their talk with adults and each other.
- Current evidence in children's learning journals shows that progress in writing is good. Pupils are moving from mark making to forming letters quickly.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported. Leaders work closely with parents to make sure that children's needs are met.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. As in the rest of the school, there is a strong culture, awareness and determination to keep children safe and happy.
- Adults constantly observe children's learning and interests and collect information on their progress. However, this information could be better used to plan next steps in children's learning more effectively.

School details

Unique reference number	100890
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10041051

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	617
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Hall
Headteacher	Monica Forty
Telephone number	020 7790 4110
Website	www.benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Email address	mforty@benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Ben Jonson is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the previous inspection, the school had an interim headteacher before the appointment of a new substantive headteacher in September 2015.
- The majority of pupils are from ethnic minority groups, and the number who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and require additional support is above the national average and rising.

- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards set by the government.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the inclusion leader and newly qualified teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with different groups of pupils.
- The lead inspector held meetings with three governors, including the chair, and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors observed 41 lessons, or parts of lessons, some jointly with school leaders.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in and around the school, during the breakfast and after-school club, in school assembly, at lunchtime and on the playground.
- Together with leaders, inspectors looked in detail at a range of pupils' books and work in different subjects. Inspectors heard some pupils read and spoke with pupils throughout the inspection about their learning.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's checks on the suitability of adults to work with children and other safer recruitment documentation. Leaders made available the school's own self-evaluation document, pupils' assessment information, development plans, minutes of governing body meetings and documentation regarding child protection.
- The lead inspector took into consideration the views of 41 parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View and the school's own survey. Inspectors also spoke to some parents before and after school.

Inspection team

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