

Poplar Primary School

Poplar Road South, Merton Park, London, SW19 3JZ

Inspection dates 14–15 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has successfully ensured that pupils continue to achieve well regardless of the challenges faced during a major building expansion.
- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 has been above average for the last three years. This is because the quality of teaching over time is good.
- School leaders have been effective in supporting teachers to improve their practice through its training programmes.
- Pupils feel safe and behaviour is good.
- Children in the early years are happy and enjoy learning in their new environments. As a result, they make good progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in all aspects of the school's work.
- The curriculum is exciting and gives pupils a range of experiences beyond the school environment. It prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Governors are effective in carrying out their roles. They have continued to ensure that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are at least good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work in mathematics, including in the early years, does not always challenge the most-able.
- Teachers' marking in mathematics does not always give pupils clear guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Some middle leaders are new to their role. It is too soon to see the full impact of their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, including part of a production by pupils in Year 6 and a whole school assembly. Three lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher and deputy. Also, inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with key staff with responsibilities, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. They also spoke to pupils informally in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors took account of 148 responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View, and all written comments sent in by parents. Also 52 responses to the staff questionnaires were considered. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including: governing body minutes; information about pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance; and, information relating to behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sharona Semlali, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- The school became a three-form entry school in 2012. A large expansion of the school building started in July 2013 and finished in April 2015.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education and a Merton Education Partner.
- There is a part-time morning and afternoon Nursery and three full-time Reception classes in the early years provision.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion that speak English as an additional language are above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. This funding is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school manages its own breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - there is sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils and for children in the early years provision
 - teachers' marking gives pupils clear guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Develop the roles of the new middle leaders so that they can be fully involved in monitoring their areas of responsibilities.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been effective in ensuring behaviour is good and pupils achieve well despite the challenges of the major building works and expansion to the school. She is fully supported by an able deputy and a stable team of motivated staff.
- Senior leaders have a wealth of data which they use well to track pupils' achievements. As a result, additional support is quickly put into place for those pupils who are not making the desired progress. All teachers are diligently held to account about their pupils' performance by senior leaders. The school is firmly committed to ensuring that all of its pupils have an equal chance of succeeding. They do not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- The middle leaders are very motivated and highly driven. However, because some are fairly new to their roles, they are not yet fully involved in the monitoring of their areas. Therefore, it is too soon to see the impact of their work.
- The spending of the pupil premium is used well to close the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. Some of this funding has ensured that those eligible get the additional adult support when needed. Also, part of it is used to ensure that these pupils do not miss out on getting important experiences, such as trips and residential visits.
- The school provides a very exciting and relevant curriculum. It is enriched by the wide range of visits and clubs offered. Pupils benefit from teaching by specialist teachers for subjects such as art, music and French. They successfully learn how to grow plants and vegetables in their garden allotment. All of this enables them to make rapid gains in their learning. This is reflected in the high quality displays around the school. The curriculum prepares them well for life in modern Britain. For example pupils learn about other faiths and cultures through their numerous visits to different places beyond the school. Pupils learn about democracy by electing their school council and going to the Houses of Parliament.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through all aspects of the school's work. Pupils celebrate different religious festivals and through their visits to different places of worship such as the synagogue they enhance their understanding further. Pupils are well behaved and they take their responsibilities seriously. They learn about the 'rights of a child' and how they need to support others by acting responsibly. Pupils raise funds for those who have less than them. For example, they raise funds for resources such as toothbrushes for children in slums in Kibera, Kenya.
- Leaders make good use of the primary sport funding. It has helped to upskill teachers so that pupils have access to high quality lessons. An increased proportion of pupils take part in a wide range of clubs. The school has been awarded a prestigious 'gold award' for offering the highest level of physical education in Merton. The funding has also helped the school to enter pupils for every Merton borough competition and they received an award for this too.
- The school works successfully to foster good relationships with parents. Some of the comments by parents include 'my child is happy' and 'I can always speak to staff about any issues'. Almost all of the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.
- The local authority provides light touch support because this is a good school. It often uses the headteacher to provide support for other schools in the local authority.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. All staff are extremely vigilant and ensure that all pupils, particularly those that find themselves in vulnerable positions, are well cared for.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a wealth of experience and expertise. The governors are very committed and keep themselves updated with any changes in education, particularly in relation to safeguarding. They diligently hold leaders to account and are rigorous in evaluating their own work. They are fully involved in the strategic direction of the school and in evaluating the school's performance.
 - Governors have a sharp understanding of the school's data and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need improving. They make regular visits to the school and closely monitor the school's work. This helps them to know what the quality of teaching is like in the different classes. Governors make sure that any increases to teachers' salary are linked to pupils' outcomes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff, parents and pupils strongly agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils are polite, well-mannered and courteous when they move around the school. Leaders often receive positive comments from members of the public when pupils go out on external visits.
- There are instances of exemplary behaviour, for example in lessons and during the Year 6 performance. Children learn to work well together right from the time they start school. Friendship across all ethnic and religious backgrounds is strong. There is a good emphasis on mutual respect and tolerance for others' views. Pupils have lots of opportunities to engage in debating issues, such as fox hunting. However, on the odd occasion where an activity does not engage their interest, pupils do not concentrate fully.
- During playtimes and lunch times pupils play well together. They use the wide range of equipment and apparatus responsibly, with full regard to the safety of others. Pupils enjoy taking on different responsibilities. For example, at lunchtimes, some of the older pupils read to the younger ones in the library. Members of the 'eco council' monitor the usage of the solar panels. Others tend to the school's allotment.
- The breakfast club provides a healthy, safe and enjoyable start to the day for those pupils who attend it.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff training on how to keep pupils safe is up to date. The school's site is safe and secure. Rigorous checks are made on visitors before they enter the premises. All staff, governors and visitors wear special coloured lanyards that are recognisable by pupils. Governors undertake regular health and safety checks of the school site. As a result, pupils say they feel safe in all areas of the school.
- Pupils are well informed about the different types of bullying. They say that it rarely happens in school, but when it does it is swiftly dealt with by staff. All of them have someone who they can talk to if they have any issues. The behaviour and learning mentor team plays a major part in supervising pupils during their breaks and with dealing with any disputes.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Those in Year 5 have been very active in helping others know how to keep safe when using computers. They are taught well on how to deal with cyber bullying.
- Attendance has improved and is broadly average.

The quality of teaching is good

- School leaders have placed strong emphasis on training for teachers. This includes getting teachers to observe each other teach and in getting them to see good and outstanding practice. Newly qualified teachers say they feel well supported. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Writing is taught well. This has been a focus for the school. Teachers ensure that pupils are encouraged to write for a real purpose. An example of this was when pupils wrote a persuasive letter to the headteacher asking for a big top circus; this came from a book that they were reading. They were pleasantly surprised when this happened.
- Teachers use relevant and engaging books to successfully stimulate pupils' imagination and develop their writing skills. Reading is strongly promoted throughout the school. Those who are at the early stages of learning to read are taught well. Parents are encouraged to take books home to read to their children as soon as they start in the Nursery class. They are confident in using the sounds that letters make to read difficult words. Pupils have lots of opportunities to perform and successfully develop their speaking and listening skills, which are vital in developing their mastery to read and write. For example, at the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 6 took part in an excellent performance of *Alice in Wonderland*. This really highlighted how well these skills are developed in the way they learnt and recited their demanding scripts in a confident and polished manner.
- Teachers are effective in getting pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems. Leaders recognised that previously girls did not perform as well as boys in mathematics. After doing some research in to the causes of this with Brunel University, teachers have been effective in addressing it. As a result, girls are doing just as well boys in this subject. However, the weaker aspect of the provision in mathematics is that, at times, the work given to the most-able pupils is not always challenging enough. Also, work in mathematics books shows that teachers' marking does not always give pupils clear guidance on how they can improve or extend their understanding.

- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, particularly when they are supporting pupils in small groups. As a result, these pupils are helped well to overcome their barriers to learning and make accelerated progress.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics from pupils' starting points at the end of Year 2 has been significantly above average for the last three years. Progress is good in all subjects for pupils currently in the different year groups.
- In 2014, the overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 had significantly improved and is now average. At the end of Year 6, the overall attainment had fallen, but was still above the national average.
- The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates are narrowing. They make good progress across the school, from often much lower starting points than all other pupils. Some have special educational needs and/or at the early stages of learning English. Their needs are often complex. The unvalidated information in 2015 for Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium funding shows that they were around three terms behind their classmates in reading. They were around four terms behind their classmates in writing and mathematics.
- When comparing the gaps for the most recent information in 2015 for disadvantaged pupils in the school with the 2014 results for pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were just under two terms behind in reading. In writing, they were just over four terms behind. They were just under four terms behind in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. This is because their needs are readily identified from an early stage. Their progress is tracked carefully and a range of support is swiftly put into place when needed. Pupils' social, emotional and health needs are particularly well supported through the expertise of trained staff.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their peers in the school. Those pupils who are at the early stages of learning English make good progress with their spoken and written language.
- There is good provision for the most-able pupils. For example, these pupils take part in drama club productions and student doctors from the local hospital teach them science. The most-able pupils at sports have the opportunity to compete in different types of sport at their level. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at the end of Year 6 in 2014 was above average in reading and mathematics. However, it was below average in writing. Nonetheless, inspection information confirmed that the most-able pupils were not sufficiently challenged in mathematics.

The early years provision is good

- All groups of children make good progress from their starting points, which are below what is typical for their age. The proportion of children that achieved a good level of development in 2015 was above average. The proportion meeting the early learning goals was also above average in all areas except in shape, space and number. This is improving over time.
- Children make exceptional progress in reading and writing. However, sometimes, the most-able children do not always receive sufficient challenge, particularly in their mathematical work. Overall, children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teachers plan activities based on exciting stories and on children's interests. They plan plenty of interesting visits, which all children enjoy. This is reflected in the high quality displays of children's work and learning experiences.
- Children are encouraged to develop their curiosity through investigation and exploration. For example, they were highly intrigued and fascinated when they observed caterpillars turning into butterflies and watching the hatching of chicks. Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught well. This helps children to have a go at reading simple stories. They enjoy reading for pleasure. The most-able children write traditional fairy tales, at length, using joined up script with mostly accurate spellings.
- Stimulating activities in both indoor and outdoor areas enable children to enjoy learning. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. They play and work amicably and make a good contribution to the smooth running of the provision. Children share resources well, wait for their turn and tidy away their activities quickly.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The leader is well supported by the headteacher. Together, they have established very strong relationships with parents. Parents are kept well informed about their child's

learning. They contribute well to their children's learning by sharing any special events with the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102644
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	448707

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	544
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Foster
Headteacher	Katharine Davies
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 March 2010
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