

Inspection of a good school: Whittingham Primary Academy

Higham Hill Road, Walthamstow, London E17 5QX

Inspection dates:

12–13 February 2020

Outcome

Whittingham Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. Staff know pupils and their families well and provide a nurturing environment. Parents and carers told me that they like the school's strong 'family feel'. Pupils told me that they feel safe and listened to by adults. All pupils are welcomed, regardless of background or needs.

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. Parents told me that pupils are well prepared for secondary school. One parent wrote that she is amazed by how rapidly her child is learning. Pupils start to learn about the world of work very early and are encouraged to be ambitious. A child in Reception, dressed as a police officer, told me, 'When I grow up, I want to be a police officer and catch baddies.'

Pupils are polite and friendly. Pupils reported that bullying is rare. Pupils told me that if they have a problem, adults help them to sort it out quickly. There is a calm, purposeful environment around the school. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are eager to talk about what they have learned. For example, a pupil in Year 5 shared his science work with me and explained that at the end of an experiment he goes back to his hypothesis to 'check if it is right or wrong'. Pupils help each other to learn, and all celebrate when a pupil achieves well.

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

Leaders have thought carefully about the subjects that pupils learn and the order in which they study key content. In science and mathematics, what pupils learn and when is well established. Other subjects have been reviewed recently to ensure that they are as ambitious and challenging. Leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Pupils now have frequent opportunities to explain their thinking in mathematics. They also have more opportunities in science to investigate and do practical work than in the past.

All pupils achieve well. Staff are ambitious for all pupils, and learning is demanding. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy debating, for example whether Vikings deserved their reputation for being violent. They draw on sources they have studied in previous lessons to support their arguments. Pupils learn a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary. For example, pupils in Year 1 explained to me the meaning of 'defence' and 'attack', words that they learned while studying castles in history.

Leaders prioritise reading. Staff are well trained and are experts in teaching phonics. Children start learning phonics on entry into Nursery. The school uses a structured, well-ordered approach. Pupils are assessed regularly to ensure that they make strong progress. Any pupils falling behind are helped to catch up. As a result, pupils quickly become fluent readers. One parent of a child in Reception typically wrote, 'I can't believe he is reading already!'

Leaders and staff are passionate about developing a love of reading. Pupils enjoy talking about their favourite authors. They read often and enjoy daily story time. Reading books are well matched to pupils' reading ability. However, the choice of literature for more confident readers is limited.

In the early years, I saw how busy and excited the children are about learning. For example, I observed children exploring a map. They drove toys around the road system and stopped at the shops and other places of interest. Children in the Nursery were excited when they discovered mathematics resources and counting instruments hidden in the sandpit. They used them to count and noticed when they added up to the same total.

Teachers ensure that pupils develop a deep understanding of what is taught. Leaders are keen to embed pupils' key knowledge by practising skills across subjects. For example, pupils in Year 2 used mapping skills learned in geography to create a simple map in history. Pupils learn through a range of engaging activities. These are well selected for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders provide a range of opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences. Recently, for example, pupils entered a story-writing competition organised for all pupils attending schools within the multi-academy trust (MAT). Pupils enjoy the educational visits that leaders organise. However, enrichment activities are not generally well matched to the school's new curriculum. There is a range of clubs offered, including karate, choir, poetry and drama. Leaders check that activities organised during club sessions are of high quality.

The school has recently gone through a period of significant change. The headteacher, supported by other senior leaders, has prioritised effectively to maintain the quality of education at the school. Staff are loyal to the school and enjoy working here. They told me that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

The new trust has strong systems in place to hold leaders to account for their work. They also provide a wide range of support. Teachers appreciate the training and development on offer from the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders have ensured that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. All staff know what they should do to keep pupils safe and what action to take should they have any concerns. The school has effective systems in place to monitor and track any issues, in order to keep pupils safe.

Pupils told me that they feel safe at school and could name an adult they would speak to if they were worried or had any problems. When needed, the school works with outside agencies to support pupils' well-being. Leaders prioritise this and challenge agencies should they feel that insufficient action has been taken to address any concerns that may arise.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils have a love of reading, but the range of texts that most-able pupils read is limited. Leaders should expand the range of reading texts on offer to represent the context of the school more closely and to support the development of pupils' cultural capital.
- Educational visits and outings that leaders organise are not currently well matched to the subjects and content that pupils learn. Leaders should review the educational visits on offer to ensure that learning is enriched through relevant experiences beyond the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 6–7 July 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	139317
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10121621
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	427
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of Trust	Richard Greenhalgh
Headteacher	Helen Smith
Website	www.whittinghamprimaryacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 July 2016

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average school.
- In April 2019, the school joined United Learning MAT.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, I met with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- I did deep dives in the subjects of reading, mathematics and history to explore the quality of education. This included meeting with the curriculum leaders for these subjects, visiting lessons, talking to pupils, listening to pupils read, speaking with teachers and looking at pupils' work.
- During breaktime and lunchtime, I observed pupils' behaviour and spoke to pupils informally.
- I spoke with staff about their work, workload and well-being. I also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- I met with a representative from the trust. I also spoke to a trustee and the chair of the governing body.

- I spoke to parents and considered 38 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and 20 written comments.
- I scrutinised a wide range of documentation in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Helen Morrison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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