

Robert Blair School

Brewery Road, Islington, London N7 9QJ

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2019

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

- Since the last full inspection, leaders and governors have made significant changes to staffing to maintain a good quality of education.
- School leaders, including middle leaders, have an accurate understanding of the areas for improvement in the school. They have taken swift action to implement any necessary changes. The most recently appointed leaders acknowledge that they need more time to embed the actions taken to develop the curriculum in their areas of responsibility.
- Teaching and learning are good. Best practice is shared. Teachers value the professional development they receive to improve their practice.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils make particularly good progress in art and history.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught well and are promoted across the wider curriculum. However, occasionally pupils' presentation of their work is inconsistent, particularly in English.
- This is a highly inclusive school. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is good. These pupils are supported well and make good progress from their starting points.
- The quality of provision in the early years foundation stage is good. Children make strong progress from their starting points because adults know them well and plan exciting learning experiences that develop their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are extremely proud of their school and enjoy being there. They benefit from attentive pastoral care from the minute they join the school.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are taught to be good citizens and help others.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe in the wider community.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that high expectations of pupils' presentation of their work are shared by all.
- Improve leadership and management by continuing to develop newly appointed middle leaders so they are more precise in their monitoring of the curriculum and its impact on outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have overcome the challenges of the past four years to maintain good outcomes for pupils. They have managed staffing difficulties with determination. They have ensured significant investment in leadership: several leaders are new to the school and have acted quickly to ensure that previous areas of weakness have improved rapidly.
- The headteacher and her team have high expectations of their pupils. Their clear vision for the school has ensured that good standards have been maintained.
- Leaders make effective use of professional development to improve teaching. They work with other schools to ensure that teachers have opportunities to plan with colleagues, especially in English. As a result, the quality of teaching of reading and writing is consistent across all year groups.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have invested time in planning a curriculum that is highly engaging for pupils. They have thought very carefully about subjects and topics that will interest pupils. There is a strong focus on the arts and leaders ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop their creativity. However, the school has acknowledged that newly appointed middle leaders need more time to put planned curriculum changes into action.
- Leaders have successfully addressed the underachievement of pupils in particular subjects, and of groups of pupils including boys and the most-able pupils. There is now greater consistency of provision and no groups of pupils underachieve.
- School leaders promote equality of opportunity through the curriculum, ensuring that there is accessibility for pupils with SEND. In lessons, teachers encourage pupils to celebrate the different life experiences they bring to their class. Pupils feel valued and included. They say that adults deal effectively with any form of prejudiced behaviour.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well across all aspects of school life. In lessons, pupils learn about other cultures and are encouraged to respect the religious practices of others. The promotion of fundamental British values is demonstrated in everything they learn. Pupils are taught constantly how to be responsible citizens of London, but also about their responsibilities as global citizens.

Governance of the school

- Governors take an active part in the life of the school and know the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are well informed about the impact of leaders' actions because they regularly visit the school. Governors are increasingly confident to ask challenging questions about the information they are given on pupils' progress.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's use of additional funding. They hold senior leaders to account for the impact of the pupil premium grant on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that special educational needs funding offers the best resources to pupils with SEND. Through open and honest conversations with leaders, governors share a drive for continual self-improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have created a culture at the school which keeps all children safe. The site is safe, and visitors are checked carefully. Leaders and governors have completed training on the safe recruitment of new staff. Staff know how to keep pupils safe in school and are aware of risks in the wider community. School leaders work well with external agencies to support pupils and families who need help.
- Parents, carers and pupils are confident in leaders' systems for keeping them safe. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe through lessons on e-safety and in assemblies. Pupils are also aware of risks in their community and say that they have trusted adults they can talk to if they have concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught well in both key stages. Lessons are pitched well to support the progress of all pupils, reflecting the training that staff have received.
- In the previous inspection, leaders were asked to address the teaching of the most able pupils. Teachers now use a range of strategies to provide appropriate challenge. For example, in mathematics pupils are provided with problem-solving tasks that deepen their learning; and in English they study challenging texts and have many opportunities to develop their writing.
- Teaching across a range of subjects is highly effective. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is particularly evident in history, geography and art. Teachers' plans ensure that there is clear progression in knowledge and skills in these subjects. As a result, as shown by the work in pupils' topic books, they make good progress. Teachers planning in science and occasionally in reading lessons is not as effective as in other subjects.
- The school's inclusion team ensure that pupils with SEND receive high-quality support during lessons which enables them to be successful. Additional adults and teachers plan carefully to ensure that their pupils can access the challenging curriculum. They know their pupils very well and carefully tailor learning to their needs. Pupils with SEND thrive as a result.
- Parents are encouraged to support their child through home learning. Pupils are expected to complete a range of activities at home. The weekly focus on spellings, reading and mathematics has had an impact on the standards that pupils reach.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- The personal development of the most vulnerable pupils is supported well through additional help in lessons and a wide range of therapies and external support.
- In lessons and assemblies, pupils are taught to keep themselves safe. Pupils talk with confidence about being safe both inside and outside school. They have a deep understanding of the risks they face and how to avoid them.
- Pupils are keen to learn and are clear about how they should behave in class. They listen well to each other and are respectful of each other's ideas. Pupils say that any poor behaviour is dealt with quickly by adults.
- Parents value their child's positive relationship with their teacher and say that pupils' welfare is prioritised across the school. They appreciate how quickly the school responds to any concerns.
- The school embraces all cultures and religions through assemblies and displays. The well-thought-out curriculum ensures that pupils develop a deep understanding of the world in which they live. They are able to make comparisons between their lives and those of others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons and when moving around the school site is good. The school is a calm, orderly and purposeful learning environment. Pupils are polite and courteous to one another and to adults. Older and younger pupils play well together at lunchtime and playtime, encouraged by the school's house system to look after each other.
- Leaders monitor the attendance and punctuality of groups of pupils so that no one is disadvantaged by low attendance. Attendance rates are above the national average. Attendance is tracked carefully, and external support is in place where a pupil's attendance is below the school's expectations. Parents are reminded of the importance of good attendance through weekly newsletters. Pupils are rewarded for their good attendance.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of punctuality to school and have reinforced the importance of being on time to school and lessons. As a result, pupils' punctuality has improved significantly. It is rare for a pupil to be late to school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected and higher standards in reading and mathematics was below the national average, representing average progress from their starting points. Since that time, leaders' actions have resulted in significant improvements in the teaching of English and mathematics, so that current pupils are now working at or above age-related expectations.
- After a period when pupils' attainment in reading was below average in both key stages 1 and key stage 2, there has been sustained improvement and pupils now read well. This is because pupils now gain a strong understanding of phonics, with an above-average proportion reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 national

phonics screening check. Leaders have acted to ensure that the teaching of reading across the school builds on this area of strength. In key stage 1, pupils can decode words, read fluently and develop their vocabulary. In Years 3 and 4, pupils read with increasing enthusiasm and, by Years 5 and 6, can infer meaning from texts.

- Groups of pupils who underachieved in the past are now making good progress. Boys are now performing as well as girls. More of the most able pupils are now reaching higher standards in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics as a result of the good support they receive.
- Pupils also make good gains in their learning across a range of subjects. Pupils' attainment in art and history across all year groups is impressive. Pupils create stunning artwork, showing flair and careful technique; they study a wide range of artists. In history they can discuss key historical events and have a detailed knowledge of key historical periods. However, these standards are not yet consistent across all subjects, in particular in science and occasionally in reading.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have taken effective action to improve provision in the early years foundation stage. This has resulted in a higher proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year.
- Children enjoy their time in Reception. The close relationship between the school and the on-site children's centre helps children settle quickly. Adults quickly develop strong links with parents, enabling them to make contributions to their child's learning.
- Staff are well trained. They accurately assess children's abilities when they arrive at school and create stimulating learning environments within the classroom. Independent activities are closely linked to the teaching of reading, writing and number. For example, children read the fairy tale 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and then created the characters out of dough.
- The teaching of phonics is systematic so that children quickly acquire knowledge of sounds and letters. Children are encouraged to read, although not enough time is set aside to support independent reading.
- Using careful questioning, staff develop children's language skills. They work effectively with external services to support children with speech and language needs and to identify children who may have SEND.
- Routines are well established in all classes. Children behave well because they have secure relationships with staff and because they are excited to learn.
- Leaders have correctly identified the need to invest in the outdoor provision to ensure that children's learning outside is as effective as the learning in classrooms.
- Statutory arrangements for safeguarding and welfare are met.

School details

Unique reference number	100422
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10086791

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	0 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms M Lally
Headteacher	Ms M Bahn
Telephone number	020 7607 4115
Website	www.robertblairschool.com
Email address	admin@robertblair.islington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 June 2015

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The school organises and manages a breakfast club.
- The school's provision for the early years is based in a 52-place Nursery offering full- and part-time places, and a Reception class. All children in Reception attend full time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers who are early in their teaching career.
- Inspector also held meetings with a group of randomly selected pupils, and five members of the local governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors also spoke with representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Inspectors observed learning in 15 lessons or parts of lessons, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Together with leaders, inspectors looked in detail at a range of pupils' 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 documentation regarding the safe recruitment of staff. Leaders made available the school's own self-evaluation document, improvement plan, middle leaders' action plans, minutes of governing body meetings and documentation regarding child protection.
- The lead inspector took into consideration the views of the three parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Helena Mills, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Dawn Titus

Ofsted Inspector

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