

Inspection of an outstanding school: Virginia Primary School

Virginia Road, Bethnal Green, London, E2 7NQ

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2021

Outcome

Virginia Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Virginia Primary School. They thrive through the positive relationships that leaders foster throughout the school. Staff show great care for pupils. Parents and carers are appreciative of the many clubs, residential trips and sporting activities available to their children.

Leaders make sure that pupils understand the values of the school, 'Inclusion, Growth, Empowerment, Adventure'. These values are integral to pupils' experiences and learning at school.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve in all subjects. Staff also make sure that pupils gain valuable knowledge and experiences from the local community and the wider world. For example, pupils take part in a diverse range of activities outside of the classroom. This includes many visits to museums, local community parks, galleries and exhibitions. These experiences enrich pupils' learning very well. Pupils enjoy linking what they found out on their visits to what they are learning in the classroom.

Pupils, regardless of age, are polite and courteous, showing respect for all those around them. They behave well and take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils said that bullying is very rare. When it does happen, well-trained staff deal with incidents swiftly and fairly.

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

Leaders have developed an extremely ambitious curriculum that meets pupils' needs and ensures they achieve highly. They have carefully considered what is taught in each subject, including in the early years. Alongside subject-specific knowledge, curriculum plans weave in opportunities for pupils to learn about and revisit the school's values. Through this, leaders aim to ensure pupils develop as valued and caring members of the community.

Children also get off to a flying start in the early years. Leaders ensure the curriculum plans are diverse and exciting. This helps children to explore and develop their understanding of the world around them.

Subject leaders have ensured that, over time, plans build carefully on pupils' existing knowledge. This includes making sure that pupils revisit their previous learning and consolidate what they already know. For example, Year 6 pupils practise their calculation skills confidently and accurately. They use this knowledge to solve demanding mathematical problems. Pupils are given many opportunities to discuss their thoughts and opinions. They are rarely distracted from their work.

Teachers adapt plans carefully to ensure that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as their peers. Plans are ambitious and challenging for all pupils. Teachers work closely with other adults to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result, pupils with SEND are helped to develop confidence and independence and achieve well.

Leaders make sure that reading is a high priority across the school. Pupils learn phonics as soon as they enter the Reception class. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to teach and promote reading well. For example, children love story times and listen intently. Leaders and staff are highly skilled in supporting pupils to become fluent readers. Books and class texts are carefully chosen so that pupils practise reading with sounds that they know. Older pupils, too, said that they enjoy reading a wide range of texts in many subjects.

The mathematics curriculum is well planned. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and plan activities to build on what pupils know and can remember. Learning about number begins in the Nursery. Pupils' work shows that staff are ambitious for pupils' learning. Leaders ensure plans encourage pupils to use their mathematical skills regularly. This deepens pupils' understanding of important mathematical knowledge.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about and experience life beyond the classroom and in the wider world. They promote pupils' wider development exceptionally well through a variety of additional activities and opportunities. For example, pupils enjoyed meeting and listening to a range of visitors who explained their work and careers. This is one of several special events that pupils value greatly. In the early years, staff encourage children to explore and be as independent as possible, matching the values of the school

Leaders have built positive relationships with staff and are well aware of the workload pressures that exist. They continue to take positive steps to reduce unnecessary tasks.

Governors are knowledgeable and understand their role in the school. They challenge and support leaders appropriately. Governors are strengthening their understanding of the curriculum, and the knowledge pupils gain, so that they can further challenge leaders' decisions.

Parents appreciate that staff are approachable. They also like the way the curriculum has been planned to meet pupils' needs and extend their understanding of the community and the wider world. Parents said that their children are safe and happy at school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture here. Staff are trained effectively to recognise signs of abuse or neglect. They understand the importance of reporting any concerns immediately. Leaders access a range of external services for pupils if required. Appropriate vetting checks are carried out on staff who work in the school.

Leaders help pupils understand how to keep safe. The well-planned curriculum, together with assemblies and special events, ensures that pupils learn how to manage the risks they may encounter online, in school and in the community.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in March 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 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.

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	100926
Local authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	10206477
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kathy Darby
Headteacher	Barbara Lo Giudice
Website	www.virginia.towerhamlets.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 March 2016 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, and a new chair of the governing body have been appointed.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. He held meetings with five governors, two of whom joined the meeting online, including the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents, pupils and staff through Ofsted's online questionnaires.
- The inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding, including through discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. He visited lessons in all classes, spoke to staff and pupils and looked at pupils' books. The curriculums for modern foreign languages and music were also considered.

Inspection team

Phil Garnham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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