

Inspection of Pooles Park Primary School

Lennox Road, Finsbury Park, London N4 3NW

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The curriculum is poorly designed and implemented. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not develop sufficient knowledge and understanding. This means that they are not well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are friendly and welcoming. Pupils are proud to take on roles of responsibility, such as being members of the school council or part of the environment team. They enjoy keeping the school garden tidy and looking after the plants.

Pupils enjoy participating in after-school activities, such as cooking and art. They benefit from outings to places of interest. For example, they have visited Alexandra Palace to investigate land use and local places of worship to learn about different faiths. Pupils like singing and have enjoyed performing for the wider community.

Pupils say bullying is rare. Staff deal with any reports of bullying swiftly, and pupils trust them to do so. This means pupils feel safe and are kept safe. Pupils typically behave well in the playground and enjoy the activities that are provided for them. However, pupils frequently become distracted in their classrooms, and this means learning is often disrupted.

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

The curriculum is broad and balanced and matches the scope of what is expected nationally. However, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is logically structured. The organisation of the school into mixed-age classes has not been sufficiently factored into the sequence of learning. For example, in some subjects, pupils learn content in the wrong order. This means that pupils' understanding is not built up over time. As a result, pupils are not supported to learn and remember more. Although leaders recognise these weaknesses, they have no plans in place to address the issues this academic year.

In the early years, the curriculum does not adequately support children's learning and development needs. Leaders have not identified what children need to know or be able to do. Not enough thought has been given to how children should secure and apply their understanding in each of the required areas of learning. Many staff do not have the necessary knowledge or expertise to improve children's communication, language and literacy. These weaknesses prevent children from developing the knowledge they need for Year 1.

Teachers do not systematically check what pupils know and remember. This is because the curriculum is not clear about what pupils should be learning and in what order. As a result, pupils develop misconceptions. These gaps in pupils' knowledge persist over time and mean that pupils frequently struggle to understand more complex ideas.

The teaching of early reading, including phonics, is not effective. This is because leaders have not provided adequate training for staff. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in the way phonics is taught. The books pupils read do not consistently match the sounds they know. This means that pupils do not get sufficient opportunity to practise and embed these sounds. The programme used to help older pupils who struggle with reading to catch up is not effective. This is because sounds are taught in a different sequence to the main phonics programme. In addition, the books that these pupils read do not match the sequence of learning. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, do not secure the knowledge they need to read accurately or fluently.

Pupils with SEND are swiftly identified. Leaders work with a range of outside agencies to seek advice and guidance on how to best provide support for these pupils. However, the weaknesses in curriculum design and staff training mean that teachers do not have the expertise to implement the curriculum for these pupils effectively.

Behaviour in the playground is typically positive. Pupils play well together and show kindness and consideration towards each other. However, in some lessons, pupils become easily distracted and lose focus on their learning. This is often because pupils are not clear about what staff expect of them. This means that, in several classes, learning is disrupted. Leaders have appropriate systems in place for tackling pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Pupils' personal development is well considered. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of caring for the environment. For example, pupils appreciate that responding to climate change is everyone's responsibility. Members of the school council enjoy supporting charities, such as the Royal British Legion.

Leaders and those responsible for governance have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, they are not sufficiently aware of the impact of those weaknesses. This means they have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness and have not identified the right priorities moving forward.

Staff enjoy working at the school and appreciate that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have effective systems in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff receive regular training. This ensures that they recognise the signs which could indicate that a pupil may be at risk of neglect or harm.

Leaders work in partnership with outside agencies to ensure that children and their families receive the help they need.

Leaders and governors ensure that the single central register of pre-employment checks is reviewed regularly to confirm that all checks are accurate and up to date.

The curriculum helps pupils to understand ways to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils are taught how to manage the potential risks of working online and the importance of consent as part of a healthy relationship.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in several subjects, and in the early years, is poorly designed and implemented. As a result, pupils do not develop the knowledge and understanding they need to tackle more complex ideas. This means they are not well prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders must ensure that the curriculum is sequenced so that pupils build their understanding cumulatively. This will provide pupils with more opportunity to revisit, practise and embed important ideas before progressing to more challenging learning.
- Leaders have not ensured that reading is a high enough priority. Pupils do not develop as fluent, confident or accurate readers. This means they are not well-prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders must provide training for all staff so that they teach phonics with accuracy and precision. Leaders must ensure that the books pupils read are closely matched to the sounds that they have learned. Support for weaker readers should provide greater opportunity to practise and embed the sounds pupils learn.
- In some classes, pupils become easily distracted. This means that learning is often disrupted. Leaders must ensure that staff have consistent expectations of pupils' behaviour in line with the agreed behaviour policy.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness. Although they recognise the school's weaknesses, they have not tackled them swiftly enough. As a result, the education pupils receive is weak. Pupils are not well-prepared for the next stage of their education. Leaders and those responsible for governance must gain a clear oversight of the impact of the curriculum for all pupils, including those with SEND. This will ensure that priorities for improvement are better focused on addressing the school's weaknesses.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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.

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	131741
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10210966
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Norman-Bruce
Headteacher	Greg Crawford (executive headteacher)
Website	www.poolespark.com
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the leadership structure of the school. The substantive headteacher is now the executive headteacher. The deputy headteacher is now the head of school.
- The number of pupils on roll has fallen significantly since the previous inspection.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read as well observing them reading in small groups.
- Inspectors considered other areas of the curriculum as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, head of school and other leaders. They also spoke with subject leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors spoke with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors talked with pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during playtimes and lunchtimes and around the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by school leaders, including the school development plan, leaders' self-evaluation document and the minutes taken at governors' meetings.
- The inspection team considered the views of pupils, parents and staff in discussions and through considering their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Dawn Titus, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Samantha Ingram

His Majesty's Inspector

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