

Finchley and Acton Yochien School

6 Hendon Avenue, London, N3 1UE
Playing Field, Queen's Drive, London W3 0HT

Inspection dates 17–19 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Early years provision	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

This is a school which requires improvement. It is not good because

- New systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching are not fully developed.
- The outdoor areas are not used effectively to promote learning across all subjects taught.
- Planned activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for all groups of pupils, particularly the most-able.
- Teachers do not make good enough use of the time available to promote pupils' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership has improved significantly with the appointment of an additional manager.
- Many new systems ensure that planning and record-keeping are thorough. All information is now recorded in Japanese and English.
- Children are now taught English more frequently than previously. They have more opportunities to learn to read and write in English.
- Children achieve particularly well in their mathematical and physical development.
- The school's procedures to keep children safe are rigorous.
- Better teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is improving children's skills in reading.
- Children behave very well. Relationships are excellent. Children are cared for very well.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They particularly enjoy the outdoor facilities.
- Links with parents and carers are a strength.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The proprietor knows the school well and is keen to provide the best for the community it serves.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 13 lessons across the two school sites. Two of these were joint observations with the school manager. Inspectors were accompanied by an interpreter in most lessons.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' recent written work and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, manager and the school administrator.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, but the inspectors looked at recent parent surveys conducted at each site. Inspectors also met a number of parents at each site.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement. They also considered documents relating to behaviour, attendance, parental complaints, health, safety and safeguarding and the systems for checking pupils' progress. Inspectors checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Finchley and Acton Yochien School is a non-selective, non-denominational, co-educational day kindergarten.
- The school was established primarily to meet the needs of Japanese families temporarily living in London. All pupils are of Japanese heritage and speak Japanese as their main language. Around two thirds of families return to Japan when their work contract finishes. For that reason, the school follows the Japanese curriculum so that children have continuity in their education. A small number of pupils remain longer in the United Kingdom and transfer either to the Japanese School, Primary Section, at agesix, or to the Reception class in a maintained primary school. A greater proportion of the pupils at the Acton site than at Finchley remain in the school until they have completed Year One and then transfer to the Japanese School.
- Although, in the past, all staff were Japanese, the school has, more recently, employed three additional staff who speak English as their first language. Consequently, children are now taught in English for a greater proportion of their time, so enabling them to become more fully bilingual.
- The school occupies a spacious suburban property in Finchley and a modified sports pavilion, on an extensive site, in Acton.
- There are currently 53 pupils on the Finchley site, six of whom are under three. There are 71 pupils on the Acton site, four of whom are under three. No children are in receipt of government funding on the Finchley site. However, about half receive funding on the Acton site.
- Children of Nursery and Reception age all attend full time. Pupils are taught in four classes on each site. The Japanese school year begins in April. Currently, therefore, all children are approaching the end of their first term in their respective year groups. Almost all Year 1 pupils are still working within the early years curriculum, mainly because they are still making up ground in learning to read and write in English.
- No pupils are identified as disabled or having special educational needs. There are, therefore, no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has not identified any pupils as being disadvantaged.
- Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language. However, a few pupils have one parent of English heritage. These pupils sometimes speak English as their first language.
- The school has a sole proprietor. It is part of a group which includes a pre-preparatory school in North London and a language school in Brighton.
- The provision for children aged two to three on each site is inspected separately. The Acton Yochien was last inspected on 6 November 2014. Finchley Yochien was last inspected on 5 March 2015.
- The last inspection of the provision for children aged three to six took place on 19 January 2012, when a large number of the regulations were not met. These issues were subsequently rectified so that, by April 2013, all regulations were met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management by developing a more rigorous approach to monitoring and improving the quality of teaching.
- Raise pupils' achievement further by ensuring that:
 - more effective use is made of the time available during the school day
 - tasks provided are well-matched to the aptitudes and needs of individual pupils, particularly the most-able
 - the outdoor area is better resourced to promote sustained learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- **The school must meet the following independent school standards**
 - ensure that the teaching involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (paragraph 3 (c))
 - ensure that the teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3 (d)).

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- While the early years curriculum is increasingly well established, there are weaknesses in the matching of work to children's individual needs. The most-able are not consistently challenged, particularly in developing their reading and writing skills in English. Opportunities for outdoor learning exist, but these focus too much on free play or on physical development opportunities.
- The implementation of formal monitoring structures and procedures for setting targets for teachers is at an early stage. While teachers are observed regularly, there is not enough attention given to setting targets and measuring improvement against these on subsequent visits.
- The capacity of leadership has increased significantly with the appointment of an additional manager who has a thorough understanding both of English and of the early years curriculum. While there is further work to do to clarify roles and responsibilities within the team, this appointment has contributed positively to the rapid progress the school has made. For example, recently implementing a range of new systems, including rigorous assessment procedures and thorough school self-evaluation processes. A better balance has been secured between the Japanese curriculum and opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and understanding of English.
- Senior leaders promote positive attitudes, strong values, and a culture of increasingly high expectations, so that teaching ensures children behave and achieve steadily.
- There are strengths in the provision for mathematical and physical development. Opportunities for children to read and write in English have improved significantly in the last two terms. Daily teaching of phonics was introduced in the current term. The curriculum is increasingly successful in promoting children's literacy and numeracy skills and their personal development.
- The current statutory safeguarding arrangements are securely in place and almost all of the independent school regulations are met. Senior leaders recognise that there is still work to do to ensure that children's achievement is more consistently rapid and that all teachers improve their confidence in teaching English.
- The leadership structure is simple, given the relatively small size of the school, and is largely structured around ensuring the care and safety of pupils. Additional expertise has been gained with the appointment of three staff who speak English as their first language. Expertise in physical education has contributed to the good progress children make.
- Senior leaders are increasingly aware of where the impact of teaching is greatest. Through links with other schools, staff are able to build expertise from observing other early years practitioners at work.
- An assessment system has been implemented, in line with the early years guidance. Detailed evaluations are now included in English as well as Japanese.
- The promotion of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school successfully promotes British values. Children make many visits, for example, to the local parish church, to St Paul's Cathedral and London Zoo. They celebrate St George's Day and the Queen's birthday. Local police officers visit the school as do players from Arsenal Football Club. There are many photographs and displays which remind children of the diversity of the world. Japanese and British flags hang side by side on the school graduation day. Children recognise their rights and responsibilities as British citizens and are increasingly prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all. Discrimination in any form is not acceptable.
- School leaders have secured strong links with parents, who are consistently happy with the provision the school makes.
- The Acton School, in the London Borough of Ealing, has derived considerable benefit from the support provided by local authority early years staff.

■ The governance of the school:

The school has a sole proprietor. Although he has business interests elsewhere and was not in school during the inspection, staff speak positively of his commitment to the school and to the Japanese community in London, and of his frequent interaction with the children when available. His interests are represented on a daily basis by the administrator, a member of the senior leadership team. By this means, he is well informed about the school's work and school improvement. There is considerable investment in recruiting effective teachers from Japan and supporting them in London. The appointment of an additional leader to strengthen the school's systems and to promote the use of English has been central to current improvements. There is an acceptance that the raising of achievement in English is a priority. The proprietor ensures, alongside senior leaders, that statutory duties and regulations are mostly met, including those for keeping pupils safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All the relevant independent school standards are met. The school has a very positive ethos. Pupils enjoy school and particularly like playing in the outdoor areas. They play together with great energy but show respect for one another.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are always keen to be the first to give an answer. Where the teaching is most challenging, they are fully engaged, listen attentively and respond to instructions promptly. They enjoy seeing whether they or their friends can complete a set of addition sums first. The more limited range of resources in the outdoor areas means that children's enthusiasm is not built upon so effectively when outside.
- The school has established clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Effective systems exist to manage and monitor how well pupils are behaving. However, these are seldom needed. Exclusions, or instances of racist behaviour, do not occur.
- Lunchtimes are particularly positive social occasions. The quality of the lunches provided is excellent.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils rarely miss school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safety procedures are rigorously implemented. Pastoral care is a strength. Pupils have faith that staff will deal with all issues rapidly.
- Safeguarding procedures meet the independent school standards. There are very rigorous safeguarding checks on all staff who join the school from other countries. Staff are thoroughly briefed on all safeguarding procedures. Record-keeping is thorough and well maintained in English.
- The school helps pupils to learn to protect themselves from risks, for example, in learning to use the climbing equipment carefully, or being aware of road safety issues.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards for pupils' safety and well-being are met.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Tasks provided for pupils are not always pitched at the right level of challenge. The most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently to make the best possible progress.
- Time is not used well enough when children are outside. Too many activities tail off in late morning, so that considerable time is given to free play. There are not enough opportunities outside the classroom to extend learning across all the areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers create a very positive climate for learning and relationships are very good. This contributes positively to effective learning. In many respects, teachers have high expectations of children. When teaching offers a high level of challenge, as in an effective phonics lesson, children are highly engaged and keen to respond.
- Mathematics is taught effectively and children are adept in using the abacus, always keen to have ever-greater numbers to add. Children enjoy demonstrating how well they can use the computers or play their melodeons. Children's learning was outstanding in a kendo (martial arts) session. Expert instruction, and the concentration, discipline and enjoyment of the children ensured that they made rapid progress.
- The greater confidence in written and spoken English of locally recruited teachers is contributing to children now making more rapid progress in reading and writing.
- While there are no children identified who are disabled or who have special educational needs, staff remain alert to any signs that children may need additional support.
- The teaching of phonics has only been in place at its current frequency for a short time. This is already having an impact, so that children's confidence in tackling new words in English is growing. It has been difficult for the established teachers, who do not always have secure skills in English, to communicate the necessary technical skills and understanding of language to enable children to become competent readers in English.
- The school has implemented effective systems to check and improve children's progress, in line with established early years practice. Records are now maintained in Japanese and English.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Not all activities provide sufficient challenge for children to make the progress of which they are capable. Older pupils do not yet have sufficiently developed skills in reading and writing in English to access the

English curriculum and make rapid progress.

- Almost all children in the school, including most of those currently aged six, are following the early years curriculum. Not all children continue to Year 1, as many return to Japan or transfer to other schools at the end of Reception. Children enrol at the Japanese School, Primary Section at age six. All children are currently working in the first term of the corresponding English curriculum year.
- The oldest pupils currently have not had the benefit of the more intensive teaching of English which is now in place further down the school. As a result, they have not, in the past, made sufficient progress in reading and writing in English and have deficits in learning to make up before they can confidently tackle all aspects of the Key Stage 1 curriculum.
- Typically, children have entered Nursery with at least average levels of skills and knowledge. However, most children have limited or no knowledge of English on entry. A few children, however, because of family circumstances, may be, to an extent, bilingual. While progress overall has been at least as expected, particularly in reading and writing in Japanese, there have not been enough opportunities for children to make sufficient progress in reading or writing in English. Consequently, they have not acquired all the skills or knowledge across the areas of learning expected by the end of the Reception year.
- A determined approach by school leaders in the current year, with greater use of English in all lessons, and more specialist teaching of English, including daily phonics, is beginning to drive more accelerated progress. However, it is too early for this to have had a significant effect upon children's attainment.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Insufficient emphasis on teaching English in the past has made it difficult for early years children to access the breadth of the curriculum or to reach the expected standard in reading and writing. Although provision has improved significantly, this is too recent to have had a significant impact upon overall achievement in English.
- Most children enter Nursery with skill levels at least typical for their age, other than in their knowledge and understanding of English. Better provision for teaching English, including effective teaching of phonics, is ensuring that children are now acquiring a better knowledge of sounds and letters, to enable them to make progress in reading.
- Progress remains uneven across the school because there is some time slippage, and opportunities for outdoor learning, although they successfully promote physical development, are not used sufficiently well. Despite the good space available, the range of activities provided to support learning in other areas is not extensive. Progress in mathematical development is generally good. Overall, the proportion of children reaching levels typical for their age was well below the national average in 2014, although this is now improving rapidly.
- Established teachers now have a better understanding of the early years curriculum. The balance of adult-directed activities, such as reading, writing and mathematics, and opportunities for children to choose from a range of activities is now generally good.
- Children behave well. They show good independence and positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate on activities for a lengthy period. Children are safe and well looked after. Staffing levels are high.
- The school works well with parents. Parents are delighted with the provision made by the school. They value the fact that the school engages closely with Japanese culture – and choose the school for that reason. Staff work well with parents once their children are in school. There is a regular exchange of information about each child's development.
- Staff undertake detailed checks on children's progress. This information is carefully recorded.
- The leadership and management of the early years have improved. The quality of care remains high. Staff engage readily with outside expertise and are keen to improve their practice when guidance is given.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement
	Grade 1	Outstanding
	Grade 2	Good
	Grade 3	Requires improvement
	Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	131128
Inspection number	462874
DfE registration number	302/6107

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Kindergarten
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2–6
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Number of part time pupils	3
Proprietor	Eikoku Maeda Gakuen Group
Chair	K Maeda
Headteacher	Junko Tanabe
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,130 to £8,530
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