

Essex Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102763
Local Authority	Newham
Inspection number	355253
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2011
Reporting inspector	John Taylor

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	983
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs R Cowan
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 28 lessons, taught by 27 teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plan and its self-evaluation, tracking information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum documentation and safeguarding procedures. Staff and pupil questionnaires and 218 questionnaires from parents and carers were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The impact of the school's strategies to raise attainment and accelerate progress, especially in mathematics, in order to eradicate remaining underachievement.
- The effectiveness of the school's actions to reduce the variations in progress and achievement between different groups of pupils.
- The impact of the school's leadership and management in driving improvements in progress, especially in mathematics.
- The impact of the school's work on increasing pupils' attendance.

Information about the school

Essex Primary is a very large primary school. The vast majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups with the larger numbers from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian backgrounds. Many enter the school speaking little or no English. About one fifth of the pupils come from refugee families or those seeking asylum. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average while the percentage who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school during each year is much higher than usually seen.

The school is part of a soft federation and collaborates with other local schools including Little Ilford Secondary School. The headteacher is on the steering group. A major programme of building works and refurbishment has just been completed.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school, where the pupils are very happy and behave exceptionally well. The parents and carers, staff and pupils are extremely positive about the school, which is due to the passion and caring attitude demonstrated by the leadership team and senior staff. Since the last inspection they have improved the extent to which the pupils feel safe and adopt healthy lifestyles, so that these are now outstanding. Pupils make an extensive contribution to the community in different ways, including their work with artists to produce termly performances for the local community. The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support to the pupils, which is helping to improve attendance and narrow the gap in attainment between different groups of pupils. Excellent relationships with outside agencies are used to identify pupils' needs and provide additional, carefully targeted support. This is particularly important for children of families whose circumstances make them vulnerable, such as refugees and asylum seekers.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage through an effective combination of direct teaching and a wide range of opportunities to learn through play and exploration. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress and achieve well. They are considerate and very supportive of each other. They enjoy their learning and are engaged by the creative curriculum which is designed to be relevant and accessible to them. There are many different strategies for helping individual pupils, and a range of clubs and activities to broaden their experiences and increase their enjoyment of learning. In some lessons, activities are not planned rigorously enough to provide consistently good levels of challenge, especially for the more able pupils in mathematics. The strong focus on developing pupils' understanding of mathematical language in order to accelerate their progress in the subject is starting to show signs of impact. Nevertheless, pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English.

The leadership team is ambitious for the school and demonstrates good capacity to sustain improvement in the future. It carries out regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve practice. There are highly effective systems in place to monitor individual pupils' progress and identify where additional support is needed. The analysis of progress data is a developing area and is not yet fully effective in identifying the relative rates of progress for different groups. The school's excellent partnerships with a number of other schools and institutions widen the pupils' experiences, enable smooth transition, and greatly enrich pupils' learning. The school's outstanding success in promoting community cohesion, at all levels, is reflected in pupils' great respect for the different cultures within the school and beyond and in the excellent cooperation and support they show to each other.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in order to raise attainment by:
 - ensuring that the more-able pupils are always given consistently challenging work
 - reducing the length of lesson introductions to give pupils more time to work independently at their own level and create a faster pace to learning.
- Fine-tune the analysis of the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils so that the school is in a stronger position to demonstrate how effectively it is reducing the achievement gap between them.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make consistently good, and in some cases outstanding, progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Progress across Years 3 to 6 has been more variable in recent years, with notable differences between English and mathematics. The school is successfully tackling past underachievement in mathematics through a range of well-targeted strategies. As a result, pupils are now making good progress. In the large majority of lessons observed the pupils made good progress because of carefully planned activities that met the needs of different groups and the engaging and relevant curriculum. One pupil said, 'I like it when the lessons are really creative.' Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning and their very positive attitudes ensure that all apply themselves diligently to their work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and, in common with their peers, this is better in English than mathematics. The many pupils who are learning English are rapidly helped to acquire the language they need to make sense of the curriculum and, thereafter make good progress in line with other pupils. Past underperformance in mathematics is being tackled well through the use of new resources and interventions.

A good feature of pupils' learning is the way they help and support one another in their learning, for example by discussing and explaining new ideas with 'talking partners'. In this way they reflect on their learning and improve their understanding. Pupils are frequently encouraged to discuss their ideas. In a science lesson, pupils readily offered suggestions as to why raisins were 'dancing about' when put into fizzy lemonade. The teacher's skilful questioning built on the pupils' ideas to increase their understanding. Pupils run a school bank and a school council, where they have voted to change the markings and equipment in the playground. The school choir has performed at the Royal Festival Hall. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and how to lead a healthy lifestyle through eating healthy foods, such as salads, and taking plenty of exercise.

Pupils develop their social and moral understanding exceptionally well. They have a very good understanding of other cultures around the world. Their understanding of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom is extremely well developed through both their links with local groups and rural primary schools. Colourful and bright displays, such as those of the Chinese New Year and myths and legends, are used effectively around the school to increase the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural awareness.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Good collaborative planning, which is adapted to meet the needs of individual classes, is used to deliver an imaginatively creative and relevant curriculum. One parent commented, 'I love that the school celebrates multiculturalism and the children get involved with some wonderful musicians during Diwali and Black History Month.' These enrichments engage pupils' interest, generate enthusiasm and ensure they are attentive during lessons. Specialist teaching of French, music and physical education effectively enhances and broadens the curriculum. The mathematics curriculum is developing well through an increased emphasis on the use of mathematical vocabulary but does not always provide sufficient challenge for the more-able pupils.

Learning is generally good because teachers provide a variety of interesting activities, lessons move along at a brisk pace and teachers use technology effectively to make them more visually engaging and accessible to all groups of pupils. In a mathematics lesson in Year 6, the teacher made effective use of 'talking partners', a short video and carefully worded questions to increase pupils' understanding of the properties of different shapes. In a small minority of lessons, the range of activities is more limited and teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively to support the learning of different groups. In a few lessons, pupils spend too little time learning independently at their own level because teachers spend too long teaching the class as a whole. This limits the progress of

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the most able. Pupils are aware of the learning objectives and success criteria in most lessons. They can clearly say what they need to do to make progress.

Pupils benefit greatly from excellent care, guidance and support. The school is making every effort, in conjunction with other local schools, to increase the pupils' attendance, by taking steps throughout the local area to discourage parents and carers from taking their children on holiday during term time. This has resulted in considerable improvements in attendance. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. One parent said, 'Contact between teacher and parent is excellent. They keep me well informed about everything that goes on.' The school provides a play group for those children who are waiting for a place in the Nursery, and this helps to prepare them very well for school. Workshops for parents and carers help them to support their children's learning. The support for vulnerable families is particularly effective and enables pupils to make the most of all that school has to offer.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's enthusiastic and caring leadership motivates and inspires staff and pupils to work in a cooperative and calm manner. There is a comprehensive programme of monitoring of planning, lessons and pupils' progress. Leaders coach and support staff where required and have formed a robust leadership structure which effectively manages this large primary school. Challenging individual targets are set for each pupil and closely monitored by teachers who discuss pupils' progress with their managers. The leadership team is aware of the need to accelerate progress in mathematics and is implementing a range of strategies to address this. There is some evidence that new initiatives are beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' understanding of key mathematical concepts and the language associated with them.

The school is mindful of its safeguarding duties; it has regularly reviewed its policies and carries out thorough risk assessments. Rigorous procedures and record keeping enhance the pupils' safety. The governing body is extremely supportive of the leadership of the school. It has a keen appreciation of the financial position and knows the school's strengths and areas for development. It has ensured that the school has remained fully open during the recent building programme. Some governors have input into the strategic direction of the school, while others play a less prominent role in this respect. Parents' and carers' engagement with and support for the school are outstanding. The school makes every opportunity to engage parents and carers in their child's education and this is greatly appreciated by the vast majority.

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The school is exceptionally successful at raising pupils' awareness of the diverse nature of the local, national and international communities. The Comenius Project has enabled some pupils to visit Italy and many others experience the different cultures of Spain, Romania and Poland. The school effectively celebrates diversity and promotes equal opportunities. The leadership team is now developing strategies to address any inequalities that remain between the different groups of pupils, by identifying underachieving pupils and driving up attainment on an individual basis.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to an excellent start in the Nursery where they quickly settle and many learn to speak English. Excellent attention to children's personal, social and emotional development across all Nursery and Reception classes results in outstanding progress in this area of learning so that children reach broadly average levels by the time they enter Year 1. Achievement is good overall, but there are variations in the rates of progress in different areas of learning, which the school is aware of and is working to eradicate. Children make good progress in developing reading, writing and mathematical skills, though their attainment in these areas is lower than in other aspects.

Each child has a book in which their progress is recorded and this is used to inform the planning of different activities. Children thoroughly enjoy learning and their behaviour is outstanding. They form excellent relationships with each other and with adults and have plenty of physical activities and healthy snacks and meals. High-quality care and a secure environment ensure that children are kept very safe. Well-planned and purposeful activities, planned around themes and incorporating all areas of learning, engage the children and generate huge enthusiasm for learning. The outdoor environment is used effectively to extend all areas of learning, with a good balance of children making choices

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and adults directing learning. For instance, in the Nursery, children move seamlessly from activity to activity, developing their skills. One group went on a number hunt, identifying numerals on a display and counting out the number of objects with the teacher's help. Adults model language very well to extend children's speaking skills. They also encourage independence rather than doing things for the children. Rigorous assessments, based on observation, are used to inform the planning. There are very good relationships and involvement with parents and carers.

The leaders have ambition and vision; they ensure rigorous safeguarding arrangements, including risk assessments. Effective monitoring of the provision accurately identifies priorities for improvement which feed into a clear action plan. There is a common sense of purpose and strong teamwork among all adults, and the leaders are having a good impact on raising attainment. The teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding, but is predominantly good. Less effective learning results when activities are unproductive and the pace of the lesson is slow.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over 22% of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire which is lower than average. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive. Almost all parents and carers said the school informs them about their child's progress, and they felt their child was making enough progress. Several wrote about the good communication with teachers and that they were kept informed about their child. One parent commented, 'The teachers are really helpful and keep me informed.' The vast majority of parents and carers said their child enjoys school and feels safe. Very few parents and carers expressed any concerns. A few parents and carers feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The inspectors saw very few instances of unacceptable behaviour because the teachers and other adults have extremely good relationships with the pupils and very high expectations which the vast majority of pupils live up to.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Essex Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 218 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 983 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	145	67	71	33	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	137	63	78	36	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	122	56	91	42	5	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	113	52	94	43	10	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	129	59	80	37	6	3	0	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	119	55	84	39	7	3	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	114	52	93	43	8	4	0	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	88	41	107	49	9	4	3	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	89	41	114	52	8	4	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	33	108	50	15	7	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	73	33	112	51	16	7	1	7
The school is led and managed effectively	100	46	108	50	6	3	0	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	138	64	71	33	6	3	0	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Essex Primary School, Manor Park E12 6QX

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You were really helpful and talked to us about your work. You are very polite, well behaved and get on well with your teachers and other adults. Most of your parents and carers told us they found Essex Primary a good school and we found it exactly the same.

These are some of the things the school does well.

- You make good progress because the teachers make learning interesting and fun.
- Your behaviour around the school is outstanding and this helps you learn well.
- You all feel very safe at school and the staff care for you exceptionally well.
- The school uses people from outside very well to bring you a wide variety of lessons and special help when you need it.
- You make excellent contributions to the community, both in school and outside the school.

We have asked school leaders to do two things to help you make even better progress.

- Make sure you make rapid progress in mathematics by giving you more time to work independently at your own level, and making sure the lessons move on a little faster.
- Look more closely at the progress made by all the different groups of pupils, so that they can help anyone who is not progressing as fast as the others.

We were pleased to see the attendance at your school is improving. This is very important, keep it up.

Yours sincerely

John Taylor

Lead inspector

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