

Squirrels Heath Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102303
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	355169
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Warner
Headteacher	Ken Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 15 lessons which were taught by a total of 13 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, parents, staff and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with safeguarding procedures and self-evaluation. They examined data and information about pupils' progress and looked at samples of their work. They also scrutinised improvement plans as well as planning for lessons and the curriculum. Minutes from meetings held by the governing body and monitoring and evaluation reports written by senior leaders and the local authority were also examined. Inspectors took account of the views of pupils and of 17 members of staff who had completed questionnaires, as well as the content of 181 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

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

- Girls' achievement in mathematics.
- The impact of the school's recent developments in the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The achievement of gifted and talented pupils.
- The effectiveness of the school's monitoring programme in enabling senior leaders to gain an accurate picture of the school's performance.

Information about the school

Most pupils who attend this larger-than-average school come from Gidea Park and North Romford. The very large majority are from White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average although proportions vary considerably between year groups. Many of those identified have moderate learning difficulties.

The deputy and assistant headteachers are new since the last inspection. The school has won a number of national awards in recent years, including the Eco Schools Silver Award and the Enterprise Challenge.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that embodies a strong feeling of community and history which pupils, and their parents and carers, thoroughly appreciate. Relationships are strong and pupils feel safe and secure. The school provides them with comprehensive guidance to help them gain an excellent understanding of how to maintain their personal safety at all times.

Recent changes in the management structure of the school have led to a strong and dynamic leadership team who are working well together to strengthen teaching, assessment and learning. In national tests, pupils' attainment dipped to broadly average in the last few years. Challenging targets are being set for pupils and these are helping to raise attainment and improve progress.

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there are some examples of good teaching around the school. Good relationships between teachers and pupils result in a pleasant, positive learning environment, where pupils work together and support each other well. Sometimes teachers do not assess pupils' progress well enough during lessons, resulting in misconceptions arising and pupils' lack of understanding being overlooked. Although pupils' work is marked regularly, teachers do not always provide useful pointers to help pupils improve. Occasionally, lesson planning does not clearly identify how additional adults will be deployed and this results in some ineffective use of time and some pupils not making the progress of which they are capable.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles and most adopt them. Recently pupils worked successfully together to prepare an exhibition to celebrate the school's centenary. An amazing turn-out of more than 1500 people from the locality to the celebrations demonstrates the school's prominent place in the community.

The new leadership team demonstrates a strong commitment towards improvement. There are satisfactory procedures in place to enable senior staff to gain a reasonable picture of the school's performance. Lessons are monitored regularly but judgements do not focus clearly enough on pupils' learning, which results in the grades awarded sometimes being too generous. Recommendations about improvements to teaching are not always followed up rigorously enough to ensure they have been carried out. Improvement plans focus correctly on the key priorities but sometimes lack clear success criteria and benchmarks to secure more rapid improvement. Governance, while satisfactory, is not focused well enough on monitoring the success of initiatives and checking on school effectiveness. Nonetheless, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, especially in the way that the curriculum has been strengthened to make it more interesting and relevant to pupils. In addition, improvements in the way that the school keeps a check on pupils' progress have provided leaders with clear information

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about the performance of individuals, classes and particular groups. This has enabled senior staff to gain a reasonable picture of the school's performance and thus informed their plans for development. There is satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' progress during lessons, so they are quickly able to address misconceptions or lack of understanding
 - ensuring that teachers' marking provides useful advice for pupils on how to improve their work
 - planning the deployment of additional adults in lessons more carefully to have a successful impact on pupils' learning.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - adopting a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of lessons by focusing more clearly on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and checking carefully to ensure that recommendations have been implemented
 - ensuring that school improvement and subject action plans contain clear and measureable success criteria and interim benchmarks by which to judge progress towards intended outcomes
 - involving the governing body more directly in monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Good partnership with the neighbouring infant school has led to joint moderation of pupils' work and the agreement of pupils' levels when they join the school in Year 3. Overall, their attainment is broadly average on entry. Inspection evidence shows that Year 6 pupils are on track to reach above average levels in English this year, confirming the rising trend of attainment in the subject. Although boys have been making satisfactory progress in mathematics, girls have, for the last two years, reached lower levels than those expected nationally. Mathematics lessons have now been reorganised to ensure that girls take a more active part in lessons and feel confident to offer their ideas and suggestions and this is contributing to an improvement in their progress.

Secure systems to check pupils' progress are raising teachers' awareness of the levels at which pupils should be operating in each year and this is securely lifting attainment and ensuring satisfactory and sometimes good achievement. Pupils' with special educational needs and/or disabilities are being targeted much more effectively and this is leading to greater progress being made. The school's focus on improving provision for gifted and talented pupils has been successful. These pupils are making good progress and thoroughly enjoying the wide range of opportunities afforded to them in and outside class lessons. They recently shared their work with similar pupils from a school in a neighbouring borough, enthusing them to attempt a comparable project.

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Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All pupils demonstrate good levels of understanding for others' feelings and beliefs and go out of their way to support and encourage each other. They reflect sensitively about how to overcome temptations, for example, writing and sharing their suggestions with each other. These positive attitudes and sensitive relationships support pupils who transfer into school mid way through the year. Some of these pupils have had behavioural issues in other schools and their attendance is not always as high as that of other pupils in the school. This means that attendance is average overall. The warm welcome they receive from pupils and staff enables them to settle in quickly and make a good contribution to school life. Developing relationships with schools overseas are helping pupils to understand about life in communities outside their own immediate experience.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to present lessons confidently. Some good teaching was seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson in which pupils assumed and developed various characters from the class text, then performed short role plays, which explored the characters' feelings. Pupils were engrossed and extremely well behaved during the lesson and made good progress. They often use interactive whiteboards to make lessons more interesting and illustrate different teaching points. On occasions, pupils' misconceptions are not addressed quickly enough to enable them to

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make good progress during the rest of the lesson. Teachers' enthusiasm is often reflected in pupils' eagerness to participate and their enjoyment of learning. In a good lesson in the computer suite, for example, pupils were desperate to begin their research about Japan, having been successfully motivated by their teacher in their preparatory work in the classroom. They used computers with confidence and were able to present their work in a variety of formats.

The good curriculum has recently been reviewed to give pupils more responsibility for directing their learning and this is supporting their personal development well. The wide variety of work on display around the school shows strengths in art, music and sport. Work done to achieve silver Eco status has meant that pupils are developing a good understanding of environmental issues. Effective partnerships with local organisations provide useful opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, and other pupils to extend their academic, creative and sporting skills. Pupils appreciate the wide variety of clubs on offer. They confirm that they enjoy school and that they learn a lot in lessons. The school has recently strengthened its approach towards supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is beginning to help these pupils make more effective progress in class.

Effective links with the adjoining infant school mean that induction procedures are well established and successful. Pupils settle quickly into Year 3 and good transition arrangements help them move confidently to their secondary schools at the end of Year 6. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have will be quickly addressed. One pupil commented, 'Teachers really listen when something goes wrong. They quickly sort it out.' There are good systems in place to encourage regular attendance and the school continues to work with parents and carers of pupils whose attendance causes concern.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new leadership team is giving a firm steer to the school's work and there is a clear focus on securing improvement. Senior leaders successfully implemented a number of initiatives last year which have contributed well to improvements to pupils' attainment, especially in writing, as well as systems to check pupils' progress throughout the school. Coordinators are developing their roles satisfactorily and are involved in monitoring their subjects through examining lesson plans and pupils' work. However, school and subject improvement plans lack explicit guidance to ensure that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in evaluating the school's performance and driving improvement forward.

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Parents and carers develop good levels of trust in the staff because of the strong partnerships that exist between them and the school. The Parent Forum enables parents and carers to meet regularly with school leaders to iron out any problems or concerns. Consultation evenings each term provide good opportunities for parents and carers to find out about their children's progress and these are supplemented by informative written progress reports. Good partnerships with a wide range of agencies have provided effective opportunities to challenge gifted and talented pupils at high levels. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body provides sound support and challenge for the school. It has recently strengthened its membership and is keen to become more active in monitoring and evaluating school performance.

Safeguarding procedures are good. There are secure arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe at school. Policies and procedures are robust and regularly reviewed and management systems are clearly defined. Staff promote equality of opportunity satisfactorily. Senior staff are now able to track the progress of different groups of pupils to identify underachievement. Racist incidents are rare and procedures are in place to ensure that any which arise are tackled promptly. The school promotes community cohesion well. There is a very strong feeling of community within the school and locality and a good link with a school in a neighbouring borough. Links with communities and cultures overseas are developing.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parental questionnaires returned was higher than average. Parents and carers who responded are positive about the school's work. All agree that the school keeps their children safe and the vast majority are happy with the teaching, leadership and management of the school. These positive views were endorsed by inspection findings. A

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few felt that the school does not take enough account of their suggestions and concerns and that behaviour was not managed well enough. Inspectors observed lessons in every class, held discussions with pupils and examined the school's systems for managing behaviour. The evidence confirmed that behaviour is managed well and that lessons are very seldom disrupted. Inspectors found that views from parents and carers are sought regularly through questionnaires and that the Parent Forum meets every half-term to allow parents and carers to discuss any concerns and give ideas about school development.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Squirrels Heath Junior 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 180 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 313 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	86	48	84	46	9	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	97	54	81	45	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	50	28	117	65	10	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	26	114	63	12	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	58	32	110	61	5	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	26	113	62	15	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	28	115	64	14	8	0	0
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)	58	32	96	53	10	6	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	28	111	61	12	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	31	94	52	17	9	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	19	108	60	19	10	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	54	30	106	59	13	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	76	42	96	53	5	3	0	0

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Squirrels Heath Junior School, Romford, RM2 5TP

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently to your school and giving us your opinions about the school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us to get to know your school and how well it works. You go to a satisfactory school and these are some of the important things we found out about it.

- You understand how to keep safe, healthy and fit.
- Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Adults look after you well so you are confident to ask for help if you need it.
- You enjoy learning and appreciate all the different activities that adults organise to make learning interesting.
- You organise some exciting activities in the local community. The recent Centenary celebrations looked particularly exciting.
- The people in charge are working well with your parents and carers to make sure you are happy and healthy.

There are a few things that could be even better in your school. We have asked teachers to check your progress more carefully to make sure you all understand the lessons, and provide comments in your work books to help you improve your work. We would like the teachers to make sure that other adults in classrooms know exactly what they have to do so that they can help you make good progress. Finally, we have asked those in charge to check that lessons are going well enough, write more detailed plans to make sure that things improve at a faster rate and involve the governing body more in judging how well the school is doing.

You all can play your part in helping your school become better by making sure you work hard, behave well and attend school every day unless you are ill.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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