

# Squirrels Heath Junior School

Salisbury Road, Romford, Havering, RM2 5TP

**Inspection dates** 10–11 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Attainment in national tests for all groups of pupils has been below the national averages over the last three years in all subjects, particularly in mathematics and reading.
- There are too many inconsistencies in the rate of pupils' progress in English and mathematics across the various year groups.
- Teaching has not been consistently good for a prolonged period of time to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Learning activities are not always planned and carefully matched to pupils' learning needs to provide enough challenge to extend and deepen their learning.
- Teachers' marking does not always inform pupils how well they have done and how they can improve their work to move on to the next steps in their learning.
- Many subject leaders, who are new to their position, have not yet been fully involved in checking the quality of teaching in order to improve pupils' achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has successfully managed a difficult period of staff turmoil and accurately prioritised the need to improve pupils' achievement.
- The partnership arrangements with other schools are proving successful in helping teachers to improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make better progress.
- Governors support and challenge senior leaders to monitor and track the work of all teachers in order to help improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The school is a safe environment where good relationships exist between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves. Pupils show respect towards each other, behave well and know how to keep themselves safe.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Five of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors undertook a number of short visits to several lessons.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, a senior leader and staff in charge of subjects. Further discussions were held with a group of teachers and two groups of pupils.
- Pupils' work and teachers' marking of pupils' work was scrutinised. Inspectors looked at displays around the school and listened to pupils read in Years 3 and 6.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class, at break and lunch times, and attended two assemblies.
- Inspectors examined and discussed the school's self-evaluation report and school action plan with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. They scrutinised the information on the achievement of pupils across the school and over the past three years, monitoring records relating to the quality of teaching and learning, and safeguarding records and attendance figures.
- Inspectors took account of the responses of 18 parents to the online Parent View survey. They also spoke informally to parents at the start and end of the school day.

## Inspection team

Samuel Ofori-Kyereh, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Additional inspector
John Viner	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Squirrels Heath is a larger-than-average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those at the early stage of learning English are lower than those found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for looked-after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average, but the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs.
- Since the previous inspection, a large number of teachers have left the school and new ones have joined.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
  - teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking skills and deepen their understanding of key concepts in English and mathematics
  - marking across the school is consistent and informs pupils about what they have done well, the next steps to take to improve their work, and provides opportunities to respond to the teacher's comments
  - pupils have opportunities to assess their own or each other's work so that they can improve their work instantly.
- Raise pupils' attainment and progress, especially in mathematics and reading, by:
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan learning activities that are closely matched to the learning needs of all pupils, especially the more able
  - ensuring that the basic skills needed to carry out calculations and problem-solving activities are taught well
  - making sure early reading skills, including linking letters and sounds, are well taught for the younger pupils and that all pupils are provided with opportunities to read extensively in different subjects.
- Strengthen the leadership of the school by:
  - developing the management skills of subject leaders in checking the quality of work in their areas of responsibility
  - ensuring that subject leaders coach other teachers to improve further the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress over time, especially in reading and mathematics, because of weaknesses in teaching. Standards by the end of Year 6 have been below the national average over the past three years for all groups of pupils.
- Many pupils arrive at the school in Year 3 with skills that are below the levels expected for their age, especially in reading and mathematics. Until very recently, their progress in English and mathematics over the last three years has been below the rate expected. This means that they did not achieve as well as they should.
- The recent improvements in teaching have accelerated the progress that pupils make across the school, with the result that their attainment has risen and is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school's own tracking data and work in pupils' books indicate that some pupils are currently making faster progress so that their overall progress compares favourably with what is expected nationally. However, a small number of pupils make slower progress, especially in mathematics and reading, because their needs are not met effectively enough.
- Changes to how subjects are covered and taught are leading to some improvements. The current emphasis placed on developing pupils' writing skills across different subjects, such as science and humanities, is helping them to develop better writing skills. Older pupils are able to read fluently because of regular guided reading and literacy sessions. However, weaknesses still remain in the development of phonic skills (the linking of letters and sounds) for the youngest pupils, opportunities to read extensively in different subjects and the good teaching of the mathematical skills to enable pupils to carry out calculations and solve problems competently.
- The school has implemented early and specific interventions for pupils in all year groups who are identified as underachieving to accelerate their progress. Focused support sessions for pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding, those who speak English as additional language, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have ensured that they now make the expected progress in all lessons. The average points score (APS) of pupils supported through premium funding is getting closer to that of other pupils in school.
- The more able pupils are not yet making consistently good progress because teachers often fail to use assessment information to plan challenging activities that are matched to their learning needs. This is also the case, at times, for average and below-average attainers.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is not yet consistently good because the improvements in teaching are only recent and have not yet had time to make a full impact on accelerating pupils' progress.
- The teaching in mathematics and reading is not yet good enough and the school has rightly identified the need to improve how early reading and mathematical skills are taught.
- Teaching is improving because staff have received training in adopting effective teaching strategies that better engage pupils' interest so that they make faster progress in lessons. However, some inconsistencies remain.
- Teachers do not always use questioning to check what pupils know, to help them think about the tasks that are set and to deepen their understanding of the key concepts that are taught. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough and the work does not always provide challenge for some pupils to extend their learning, especially the more able pupils.
- Marking often fails to inform pupils about their progress and the next steps to take to improve their learning. Teachers do not always provide opportunities for pupils to respond to comments

so that they can improve on their learning, or to assess their own or each other's work.

- Learning activities usually engage pupils' interest and motivation and they are keen to complete their work and answer questions readily. These good attitudes to learning enable pupils to make the most of their lessons, although their achievement is not yet good.
- In lessons, additional adults are deployed effectively to support less able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and pupils supported through pupil premium. For example, in a Year 3 class, teachers' planning identified how additional adults should support specific pupils, with the result that these pupils made good progress.
- In more effective lessons, teachers carefully plan activities that closely match the learning needs of pupils. In such lessons, teachers use their secure subject knowledge to teach lessons that engage pupils' interest and enjoyment so that they make good progress. They address misconceptions carefully so that pupils have good grasp of key concepts in all subjects.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils typically behave well around the school and in lessons. They show respect for adults and to each other. In lessons, pupils work with each other in pairs or groups and share equipment well. They are keen to learn. They behave sensibly even when teaching fails to engage their enthusiasm.
- The school's positive behaviour management strategies recognise pupils' achievement and reward good behaviour. This approach encourages pupils to behave well. Pupils respond positively to the school's code of conduct. There are no reported cases of exclusions in the past few years.
- Pupils affirm that they are happy and feel safe in school. They are knowledgeable about different types of danger, including crossing roads, riding bicycles and the use of drugs. They talk capably about different types of bullying and show a sensible attitude to taking risks. Pupils say that bullying is rare and are confident that when it happens any problems will be quickly resolved.
- All the parents who responded to the online Parent View survey or spoke to inspectors affirmed that their children feel safe in school, and the vast majority indicated that pupils behave well.
- Pupils are keen to take responsibility and they are encouraged to use their initiative. For example, peer mediators support more vulnerable pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, to socialise and make friends. Peer mediators enjoy their role in resolving disagreements between pupils and deal with any incidents of bullying, which are rare.
- Pupils' books and displays around the school show that the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on different spiritual and moral issues.
- The school has taken effective measures to improve pupils' attendance from below average during the last inspection to above average. The school is currently working with the parents and carers of a few pupils to improve their punctuality. The majority of pupils say that they enjoy coming to school because, in many lessons, learning is fun.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- Leadership and management are not good because subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the work in their subject areas and are not doing enough to help other staff to improve their subject teaching to raise pupils' achievement further.
- The headteacher, with support from governors and the school improvement partner, has successfully managed a period of considerable change. These efforts have resulted in the restructuring of the leadership team. Key appointments have been made at both senior and middle leadership level to help raise pupils' achievement. All members of staff share a commitment to moving the school forward. Parents and carers expressed satisfaction in the leadership of the school.

- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have carefully put in place actions with clear objectives, activities and success criteria to secure further improvements. They are determined to raise standards across the school. There is a robust system for reviewing teachers' performance and teachers are rewarded only when they have achieved identified targets.
- The school has effective systems for monitoring teaching and analysing pupils' achievement. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved but it is not yet consistently good because teachers do not use the information about pupils' achievement to plan lessons that enable pupils to make progress at an even faster pace.
- Senior leaders have worked in partnership with a local primary school to help teachers improve the quality of mathematics teaching. While this partnership has brought about improvements, this is still work in progress. In addition, the skills of subject leaders to coach other teachers and constantly check the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility are not sufficiently honed to impact well enough on rapidly improving achievement.
- The subjects that pupils learn have been revised and they are becoming increasingly interesting and tailored more closely to pupils' needs. These subjects are now based on themes and they support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Exciting extra activities such as trips, visits and after-school clubs add to pupils' enjoyment of learning.
- The school implements an effective policy for promoting equal opportunity and tackles any instances of negative discrimination. The school recognises that there is still a way to go in ensuring that all pupils achieve well. However, gaps in learning and the achievement of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding and those who have special educational needs are narrowing.
- The local authority advisor has provided valuable support to the school, particularly in the monitoring of staff performance, and has helped to hold staff to account in order to raise pupils' achievement. The advisor and other training providers offer individual and whole-staff training, which has helped bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement across the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have participated in several training activities and so they are able to support and hold the leadership of the school to account. They undertake monitoring visits to the school and use the information gathered to further challenge the leadership to improve the quality of teaching. Governors help ensure that there is a close alignment between teachers' performance and progression through the pay spine. They ask challenging questions about improving pupils' achievement and are aware of the school's performance in relation to that of schools nationally. Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is used appropriately to provide social and one-to-one support for pupils who require additional help with their learning, particularly reading, and to support some pupils on educational visits and after-school clubs. The evidence available shows that the pupil premium is helping to raise the achievement of these pupils. Governors have received training in safer recruitment and child protection and fulfill their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding pupils, appropriately.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	102303
<b>Local authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	404817

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	325
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Warner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ken Burgess
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8–9 June 2011
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