

# Squirrels Heath Junior School

Salisbury Road, Romford, Essex RM2 5TP

## Inspection dates

11–12 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The new leadership team is improving aspects of the school’s work but not rapidly enough to ensure that, overall, the school is good.
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment information routinely to challenge pupils in their learning. As a result, pupils’ progress, regardless of their ability, is not yet good.
- Provision and outcomes for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities require improvement.
- Pupils do not make good progress in mathematics. There are gaps in older pupils’ learning in this subject. Leaders have not addressed these effectively.
- Subject leaders do not consistently ensure that teaching improves quickly enough. As a result, pupils do not do as well as they should across all of the subjects, other than English.
- The school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning are not sharp enough to ensure a faster rate of improvement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has introduced many beneficial initiatives and systems. She has intelligently reorganised the school’s senior leadership.
- Pupils’ reading and writing has improved. Pupils generally read well and with confidence. Their writing is of good quality and well presented.
- Most parents are generally positive about the improvements that have started under the school’s new leadership and note that their children are well looked after and feel safe.
- Pupils behave well. They like school, take pride in it, are upbeat, and ready to learn.
- Pupils’ positive attitudes are reflected in their above-average attendance. This is a notable improvement since the last inspection.
- The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere. It runs smoothly. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative.
- The governing body, with many new members, has developed its work considerably. It is starting to make a clear and positive contribution to the school’s improvement.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management so that outcomes become at least good, by:
  - ensuring that school self-evaluation and development plans are precise, and ambitious in identifying and promoting the rapid improvements needed in teaching
  - improving the leadership of all subjects across the curriculum, so that expectations of pupils are clearly set out and are much higher
  - improving the leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - ensuring that urgent action is taken to remove the gaps in older pupils' mathematical understanding.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, by:
  - ensuring that staff have high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve
  - using assessment information more sharply and precisely to provide challenging work for pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The school is improving but not quickly enough to be good at this inspection. The headteacher has introduced many innovations and new systems, which provide a solid basis for the improvements being made. The school's culture is slowly becoming more ambitious, but there is much to do yet to ensure that pupils are better challenged.
- The school's self-evaluation slightly overestimates the success of the school. It is broad in its scope but not precise enough about where further improvements are needed.
- The school development plan is not clear enough to make the improvements more rapid. Staff know what the broad improvement aims are but are less clear on how to achieve these aims and measure whether or not they are successfully achieving them.
- Subject leadership is underdeveloped. Subject leaders are keen to do well. However, leaders' focus is not clearly on raising standards. It is more focused on giving their subjects a high profile. Consequently, teachers show insufficient subject knowledge to have high enough expectations of their pupils. The curriculum is broad, and relevant to pupils, but not well enough arranged to ensure that pupils have the rich experiences and make the progress they should across all subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not routinely receive the help they require. As a result, the progress of these pupils requires improvement. Leaders have insufficient time for this work. Teaching assistants, who are deployed to support these pupils, are not well enough managed, so their work does not have enough impact on the pupils' learning. Teaching assistants typically focus on encouraging good behaviour rather than helping pupils to focus on their subject-specific learning.
- The members of the new senior leadership team have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The team is starting to show its capacity to improve the school.
- Leaders have taken effective action to tackle poor progress in mathematics in younger year groups. However, progress in mathematics for pupils in the older year groups still requires improvement overall.
- The school spends its pupil premium funding carefully and sensibly. It makes a positive difference. However, senior leaders do not check systematically enough on how much difference it makes for disadvantaged pupils. The governor with responsibility for pupil premium knows this and has begun to challenge the school on it.
- Evidence emerged in the inspection that disadvantaged pupils can be under-represented in some activities; for instance, very few take part in instrumental music teaching, even though pupil premium funds this. However, disadvantaged pupils are well represented as elected members of the school parliament.
- Teachers' performance management is rigorously carried out and in a timely way. It has led to some improvement and more consistent practice.
- The headteacher and senior leaders successfully enable staff to discuss their practice together and learn from each other. There is also useful joint working with other schools, including the adjacent infant school. This motivates staff, adds to the

consistency of practice and has helped bring about the improvements that have been made so far.

- Pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of life in Britain and fundamental British values. They comment thoughtfully about their rights and responsibilities as young citizens, recognising the diversity in modern Britain.
- Parents' views of the school are generally positive. One said, for example, 'I think this is a brilliant school. My daughter loves attending.' Many parents recognise the recent improvements. But there are some criticisms too. Commonly, parents say they would like fuller information from the school about their children's academic progress.
- The school spends its sports funding well. Staff receive useful training from an external provider which has enabled them to provide active physical education lessons which pupils enjoy. There is a worthwhile programme of sport provision out of school hours.
- The local authority has not been successful in guiding the school to be good. Its officers know the school well and have noted correctly that the school's improvement is gradual. They have not, however, insisted on a brisker pace. Nevertheless, local authority officers have provided useful support on a range of problems which the school has encountered.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body has improved its work considerably since the last inspection. The review of its work, recommended in the 2014 inspection, has been implemented.
- Many governors are very new, but they bring much valuable experience and expertise. The governing body is well led by its chair and is suitably organised.
- Governors are prepared to challenge the school. They question senior staff in depth. However, they have given only limited attention to the whole curriculum beyond English and mathematics.
- Governors provide much encouragement and astute advice to the headteacher and staff, making it very clearly known that they now expect improvement. They, too, are aware that improvement has been gradual, while reasonably pointing out that the school now has a more secure and stable staffing and management structure.
- Governors are suitably trained. They check that key tasks are correctly carried out, including for safeguarding of pupils and managing the performance of staff.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has well-ordered and strong systems for safeguarding which are shown clearly in its up-to-date and comprehensive policy. Records are meticulously kept. Staff are correctly trained and are confident in what they need to do to safeguard pupils. They are well aware of their responsibilities to protect pupils from radicalisation, for example. They know how to respond to any concerns. The school deals correctly with child protection matters.
- The curriculum includes suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about safety and safeguarding, including for when pupils are online.
- Pupils are well looked after. They are safe at school and when they undertake school

visits. The school site is kept appropriately secure.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teachers do not expect enough of pupils and do not take account of the different abilities in each class. In many lessons, all are set the same task which is quite often too easy for some pupils. When work is completed, another task is set. Pupils, including the most able, are thus not consistently challenged so that, over time, they make the best possible progress. This was evident in a science lesson. Although pupils enjoyed planting cress and learning about the water cycle, too little was expected. Some pupils already showed very high levels of understanding and the task did not challenge them to deepen their learning.
- The needs of pupils with low prior attainment, which includes some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are not sufficiently well enough addressed over time. Work set is not typically challenging or suited to their needs.
- One parent commented that 'The school is not consistent and pupils are not given work to match their ability.' Another said of their child, 'I am not sure that the school consistently manages to motivate him to explore subjects more fully or to push himself.' Inspection evidence supports these views.
- Pupils themselves have very mixed views about how hard their work is. Older pupils who met with inspectors were clear that work in mathematics is too easy. This is supported by inspection evidence. Teachers in the Year 6 mathematics sets, for example, are not sure enough of how to provide pupils with sufficiently challenging lesson content.
- Pupils' misconceptions are not routinely addressed. For example, at the start of one lesson, pupils were being taught about words finishing with 'k', 'ck' or 'que'. One pupil incorrectly, but thoughtfully, gave 'kite' as an example; this was not corrected or pointed out by staff.
- Teachers do not demonstrate strong subject knowledge in some subjects. In religious education lessons observed, for instance, pupils learned some basic facts about the Muslim faith and were respectful. However, the content of the lessons lacked richness and deeper meaning. Staff spoon-fed the pupils who had to answer questions in highly constrained ways. This limited their learning. Such lessons also indicate the weakness in subject leadership.
- There are a number of positive features of teaching. Staff have constructive relationships with pupils and show good humour. They often question pupils effectively, checking on their understanding and allowing them time to reflect on what they have learned. Teachers provide clear explanations. They check suitably that pupils have learned what they expect. Lessons proceed purposefully and with suitable pace.
- There are effective processes in place to assess how well pupils are doing. The school checks with other schools that assessments are accurate. However, teachers are not consistently using these assessments to ensure that they set demanding tasks for pupils.
- Interventions, often in small groups, to help pupils who have fallen behind or who need

extra help, are improving, as the staff involved become more experienced and better trained. This helps these pupils make more progress.

- Teaching in English shows improvement and is generally effective. Guided reading lessons are well planned and organised; the school teaches reading well.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show good levels of confidence and well-being. They are alert and keen to discuss their learning. They are happy to reflect on what they are doing and show self-awareness.
- Pupils have good opportunities to serve others and contribute to the school community. They like taking on the many useful and well-developed roles available to them, such as play buddies and elected members of the school parliament.
- Pupils show awareness of their rights and responsibilities. They know who to approach if they have any problems. They feel listened to if they have any worries or serious concerns.
- The school's pastoral care for pupils who have particular emotional needs, or who require some extra personal support is very effective. As needed, staff work with parents and other agencies effectively.
- About a quarter of those pupils who answered the Ofsted questionnaire commented that bullying could sometimes be left unresolved. However, pupils who met with inspectors reported occasional bullying but they said that they know what to do about it and that staff deal with it well. The school's records indicate that instances of bullying are reducing.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has worked hard to improve behaviour and has been successful in this. The new behaviour policy is consistently applied by staff across the school and pupils generally see the policy as fair.
- Pupils behave well and attentively in lessons and assemblies. The school rightly points this out as a successful change since the last inspection. Typically, pupils concentrate well and work well individually and in groups.
- Pupils conduct themselves well and safely when moving around the school. They are polite and friendly. They enjoy their playtimes and lunchtimes, particularly liking the lunchtime games and organised activities.
- Pupils are usually punctual to school. The school encourages and checks this carefully.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is notably above average. The school works hard to promote good attendance and this has borne fruit. Most groups of pupils attend well. However, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not as good as that of their peers.
- When teaching is less engaging, pupils' behaviour sometimes deteriorates. In these

cases, pupils become distracted or noisy because they are insufficiently interested or challenged.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics, compared to national expectations, has not improved since the last inspection. In 2016, too few Year 6 pupils met or exceeded the expected standard. They had not made enough progress since Year 3. In the last school year, pupils made better progress in some year groups than others. The current Year 6 has ground to make up in the current academic year.
- There are gaps in many current pupils' mathematical understanding, especially for older pupils, which are obvious in lessons. For instance, some Year 6 pupils cannot confidently convert from grammes to kilogrammes. The school has identified this problem and has started to take action to close the gaps.
- Because of the weaknesses in mathematics results in 2016, only one in 25 pupils achieved a high score in all three of the reading, writing and mathematics tests. This is slightly below the national average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should. This is because they are not supported effectively enough to develop sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum.
- The school does not have reliable information about how well pupils do in subjects beyond English and mathematics. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils' attainment and progress are not good enough in these other subjects. For example, in a practical science lesson exploring soil samples, pupils' understanding of the make-up of soil was not as good as it could have been. This was because they were not sure enough of what they should be looking and feeling for.
- In some subjects, there is positive evidence to show that pupils are learning usefully. This is evident in some art work and pupils' use of a wide range of artistic media. Modern foreign languages and physical education have a particularly high profile.
- Year 6 pupils in 2016 generally did well in reaching or surpassing the expected national standard in reading and writing. This shows improvement since the previous inspection. The pupils made clear and strong progress in English while in Year 6.
- Pupils' writing is well presented. Pupils learn useful techniques in literacy, such as how to use interesting vocabulary or write in paragraphs. Once work is completed, however, they tend to move on to something new without having extended their learning.
- The pupils who read to inspectors did so accurately and with good levels of comprehension. They were confident, showing enjoyment and interest. They self-corrected when needed and showed good phonic knowledge. However, the reading books for Year 3 pupils, whether higher- or lower-attaining, were too easy.
- Disadvantaged pupils generally do as well as their peers. However, there are some inconsistencies in their performance across the school. They do not achieve as well as all pupils nationally. In English, the difference, however, has become much less marked. In mathematics, it has widened. Provision for disadvantaged most-able pupils is not yet securing the outcomes needed so that they achieve as well as other most-

able pupils.

- Pupils who join the school with limited English learn to speak this language quickly. They are well provided for and, over time, achieve as well as their peers.

## School details

Unique reference number	102303
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	10011919

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	369
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Harries
Headteacher	Mary Shipton
Telephone number	01708 446472
Website	<a href="http://www.shj.havering.sch.uk">www.shj.havering.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@shj.havering.sch.uk">office@shj.havering.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	15–16 July 2014

## Information about this school

- This is an above average sized junior school in an outer London suburb. There are four classes in Year 3, and three classes in each of the other year groups. There is a separate infant school on the same site, from which most of the junior school's pupils transfer. The junior and infant schools operate breakfast and after-school clubs in the infant school building.
- The headteacher joined the school in 2015. Since then, a new deputy headteacher and two new assistant headteachers have taken up post. The assistant headteachers started in September 2016. The governing body has also changed considerably since the last inspection, with many new members and a new chair.
- The school meets the floor standards, which are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Most pupils are White British. Many other national and ethnic heritages are represented in the school, each in fairly small numbers. The proportion of pupils who speak English

as an additional language is below average.

- The proportion of pupils entitled to the support of pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school has partnerships with some other schools locally and in London more widely.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, often jointly with the headteacher. They observed around the school at play and lunchtimes and during assemblies.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work in several subjects.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors and many members of staff. They spoke with a senior representative of the local authority. They met with groups of pupils formally and informally and heard pupils from Years 3 and 6 read.
- Inspectors evaluated documents, including the school's strategic plan and evaluations, assessment information of pupils' progress, minutes of meetings, as well as records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors took close account of the views of parents from the 101 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. They analysed carefully the opinions of staff and pupils from confidential questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Robin Hammerton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Clementina Aina	Ofsted Inspector
Gulcan Asdoyuran	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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