

Squirrels Heath Junior School

Salisbury Road, Romford, Essex RM2 5TP

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are ambitious for the school. They have worked tirelessly to successfully drive improvements. As a result, outcomes and teaching have improved and are good.
- The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Where teaching is strongest, pupils make very good progress from their starting points. However, due to recent changes in staffing, some variability remains.
- Middle leaders, including subject leaders, are highly motivated and well informed. They understand pupils' strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong progress.
- Pupils are polite, articulate and show respect to each other and adults. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Pupils are encouraged to be confident, enthusiastic learners. Pupils enjoy school and cooperate well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively, ensuring that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. As a result, pupils have a strong understanding of how to be a good citizen.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders ensure that when concerns are raised, they are dealt with in a timely way, ensuring that pupils are kept safe.
- Leaders have developed a deep, well-balanced curriculum. Pupils are offered a range of learning opportunities which deepen and enhance their knowledge and skills.
- Rates of attendance are above the national average, and persistent absence is below the national average. However, the school's strategy for ensuring that some disadvantaged pupils attend more regularly is at an early stage and needs to be fully embedded.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics has improved over time.
- Occasionally, most able pupils are not provided with suitably challenging work to ensure that they achieve their best.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching is enhanced by making sure that the most effective teaching practice is shared with all new staff
 - the most able pupils are challenged consistently so that more reach the higher standard, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Improve persistent absenteeism for disadvantaged pupils by:
 - continuing to embed the strategies that have brought about improvements in their attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, leaders have worked determinedly to ensure that they have tackled previous weaknesses in the school. Strong and determined leadership is successfully driving further improvements and raising aspirations for all pupils.
- Leaders and governors know the school well. They are ambitious and have high expectations for the school. They accurately evaluate strengths and weaknesses ensuring that appropriate plans are in place to drive further improvements.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils. They ensure that teachers develop their subject knowledge through high-quality training. This enables them to focus expertly on pupils' learning. As a result, leaders and teachers are striving to secure the best outcomes for pupils. Leaders ensure that everyone at the school is working to achieve the same aim.
- Middle leaders are well-informed about their roles. They are trusted by senior leaders to identify the most important actions needed to raise standards. Leaders monitor pupils' progress closely. As a result, leaders understand how well pupils are doing across the school, and they respond appropriately if needed.
- Leaders have taken incisive action in introducing a new curriculum model across the school. The curriculum is well-balanced. It provides opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge and skills across all subjects. Vibrant displays around the school, together with evidence from work in pupils' books, demonstrate the richness of the curriculum. Pupils are interested in what they study and can talk in depth about a range of topics. They talk positively about the cross-curricular opportunities provided.
- Well-planned professional training ensures that all staff, including leaders, have opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. Teachers say that they value the extensive training, which is provided regularly by leaders and external providers. They are well supported with whole school initiatives and in their own professional development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Leaders promote the school's values and their understanding of fundamental British values well, which encourages pupils to become good citizens. For example, one pupil said, 'Our core values teach us to have passion – we are passionate about helping others.' Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons and assemblies regularly focus on areas such as respect and the importance of embracing diversity. School council members told inspectors, 'It is good to be different, we are all the same inside.'
- Pupils value the school council-elected positions of responsibility that they hold in the school, as well as opportunities to be part of the 'sports crew'. Leaders have ensured that a wide range of school clubs offer pupils opportunities to participate in sports such as archery, netball and fencing.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) supports pupils with SEND well. Systems for identification are well established, ensuring that appropriate support is put

in place appropriately. As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress.

- Leaders have well-defined strategies for using the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Their use of tracking information ensures that support is successfully targeted to the needs of this group of pupils. Disadvantaged pupils receive strong pastoral and additional learning support. As a result, leaders have used the pupil premium funding effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Leaders have used the sport funding premium effectively to enhance sports and physical education (PE) at the school. Pupils have opportunities to participate in a range of competitive tournaments in athletics, netball and boys' and girls' football. Teachers are trained to deliver PE lessons by specialist coaches. Consequently, provision for PE has improved.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a thorough understanding of the school. They support leaders well and hold them to account effectively. Governors' skills, such as in curriculum overview, finance and safeguarding, correspond well to their responsibilities within the governing body.
- Governors with relevant expertise work closely with leaders to offer a strategic overview of teaching, learning and the curriculum. Using this knowledge, they challenge and support leaders well.
- Records from governing body meetings show that they ask leaders challenging questions in order to ensure that leaders are using the pupil premium funding effectively. They have a good grasp of pupils' outcomes because they ask for the right information from leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors have established robust systems for keeping pupils safe from harm. Rigorous pre-employment checks are carried out, and detailed records of these are maintained.
- Training for staff and governors is up to date and comprehensive. Staff are vigilant, know how to recognise signs of abuse and report any concerns they may have about pupils. Records show that, when concerns are raised, leaders take swift action. Children's safeguarding files are well organised and kept up to date.
- Leaders ensure that strong pastoral support and early help procedures are used effectively. These robust systems ensure that leaders identify and support vulnerable pupils and their families well.
- Pupils have suitable opportunities to learn about different aspects of safety through the school's curriculum, external speakers and assemblies. This includes stranger danger, bicycle safety and online safety.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and most parents agree. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and know who to speak to if they are worried.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have ensured that improvements have resulted in good teaching across a wide range of subjects. Teachers and pupils have positive relationships. As a result, pupils are keen to learn, and they strive to be successful.
- Where teaching is particularly strong, teachers have deep subject knowledge and use effective strategies to develop pupils' thinking and make progress. They effectively assess how well pupils learn. Using this information, they provide extra support and challenge where required. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to work together. Pupils collaborate well, and they listen and respect each other's opinions. As a result, pupils' outcomes are improved.
- Pupils are encouraged to write for different purposes, which are linked to different genres and topics of interest across the curriculum. Teachers encourage them to edit and improve their writing to ensure that they do their very best. This enables them to develop their understanding and use of vocabulary. For example, Year 6 pupils used their knowledge of learning about the explorer Ernest Shackleton to plan an expedition to Antarctica. This helps pupils to become confident, fluent writers over time.
- Teachers plan mathematics lessons that are well structured. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise their skills and apply their knowledge to solve problems. Teachers ask pupils to explain what they have done in order to deepen their understanding.
- Pupils say that they enjoy reading and are encouraged to read regularly at home and at school. Teachers provide interesting reading spaces in classrooms and around the school, which enables a good culture of reading to be successfully established. Pupils read fluently, using a range of appropriate strategies. Through guided reading sessions, pupils are provided with opportunities to develop their comprehension skills.
- Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to ensure that additional support is effective and carefully targeted to move pupils' learning on. Pupils with SEND are taught well. Occasionally, teachers plan activities that are too difficult to meet the needs of these pupils. This is something that leaders have recognised and are working on to further improve.
- In some classes, teachers new to the school do not ensure that activities are matched precisely enough to the pupils' needs. As a result, the most able pupils are not consistently challenged to make as much progress as they can, particularly in reading and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders and teachers ensure that a calm and purposeful learning environment exists in the school. Pupils are confident and self-assured learners. They are proud of their school and of their achievements. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very

positive.

- Pupils have a thorough understanding of the school's core values of courage, growth, passion, respect and togetherness. Assemblies and the curriculum provide opportunities for pupils to develop a deep knowledge of these values. For example, during an assembly links between friendship and caring for each other were explored.
- Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and are keen to be challenged in their learning. They relish opportunities to represent the school, for example by being a member of the school council or through the many competitive sporting events.
- Leaders provide excellent opportunities to promote equality. As a result, pupils are very articulate on this issue, providing mature answers to questions. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they treat each other with respect and that it is acceptable to be different.
- Pupils have a very mature understanding of bullying. They understand the different forms it may take, including cyberbullying. Those who spoke to inspectors, or completed Ofsted's pupils' survey, said that bullying was rare. When it does happen, it is resolved promptly and in an appropriate way.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and are confident that if they have any concerns, they have a trusted adult to speak to in school. Most parents spoken to during the inspection or who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed.
- Leaders ensure that online safety is taught regularly through the computing curriculum or whenever pupils use technology. Consequently, pupils demonstrate thorough knowledge of how to stay safe online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Leadership of behaviour is strong, and monitoring shows that incidents are infrequent. Teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and, as a result, pupils conduct themselves extremely well. They settle promptly to their learning and follow adults' instructions well.
- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their learning in lessons. They discuss learning with each other sensibly in order to compare answers and consult each other's views. They are almost always attentive and instances of low-level disruption are rare.
- Pupils are aware of the incentives to behave well, and of the consequences of any behaviour that is less than good. At lunchtimes, pupils are polite and show respect to adults and each other in the dining room. In the playground, they make the most of the different activities and equipment that are available, and they play happily together.
- Leaders have ensured that attendance is a high priority for the school. As a result, attendance is above the national average and persistent absence is below the national average. Although the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved, it is still below that of other pupils both nationally and within the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Due to strong leadership and improved teaching, pupils' progress has improved. In 2018, the progress of pupils in reading was average. However, writing and mathematics were above average by the end of key stage 2. The number of pupils attaining the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 for reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. As a result, these pupils were well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Evidence seen in pupils' books and lessons indicates that the majority of current pupils are working at the expected standards for their age. This was supported by information provided by the school.
- Current disadvantaged pupils benefit from good teaching and well-focused additional support when needed. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work shows that disadvantaged pupils across the school are making more than expected progress from their starting points.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching assistants provide good extra support in lessons and at other times.
- Some of the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Evidence seen in lessons and in pupils' books shows that although these pupils have opportunities to extend their learning, they are not consistently challenged by teachers to achieve their very best.

School details

Unique reference number	102303
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	10054356

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Harries
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Shipton
Telephone number	01708 446 472
Website	www.shj.havering.sch.uk
Email address	office@shj.havering.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 to 12 October 2016

Information about this school

- Squirrels Heath Junior School is a larger-than-average sized primary school.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest group being White British.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with an EHC plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Together with leaders, inspectors scrutinised pupils' books from all year groups. Inspectors also analysed a range of information about pupils' progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read. They spoke to pupils while visiting classrooms, in the dining hall and while pupils were at play. In addition, inspectors spoke to groups of pupils formally to find out their views of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, a group of governors and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders, learning mentor, attendance officer and teachers.
- Inspectors observed some extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in assemblies, lessons, at playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed various documents provided by the school. These included the school's self-evaluation; improvement plans; the pupil premium statement; sports funding; and governing body minutes.
- Inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding and behaviour. These included the school's single central record, staff human resources files, all behaviour incidents and exclusion records, first aid records, safer handling records, and child protection and safeguarding files.
- The views of some parents were collected at the beginning and end of the school day. Inspectors took account of 58 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered 57 responses to the pupils' survey and 15 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Andrew Hook, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lando Du Plooy	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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