

# Squirrels Heath Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102303
<b>Local Authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	307963
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth McFarlane

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	327
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Bob Louth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Kenneth Burgess
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Salisbury Road Romford RM2 5TP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01708 446472
<b>Fax number</b>	01708 479472

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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Most pupils in this larger than average school are White British. Few other ethnicities are represented. Very few have English as an additional language. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities number less than the average. Within this group, just above the average have statements of educational need, mostly for moderate learning difficulties. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. The school holds the Healthy School and the Activemark awards.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Squirrels Heath Junior is a good school where pupils thrive because they are encouraged to become considerate, well-behaved and enthusiastic learners. The school works well with a range of partners to improve pupils' aspirations and confidence, assisting them to achieve. A parent, typically, commented, 'My child is very happy; the school provides a high standard of education in a safe environment.'

The headteacher sets clear direction and is well-supported by hard-working, capable managers who work very well together. This has assisted pupils to acquire good personal qualities that stand them in good stead in their lessons. They are keen to take part in all the school has to offer. They learn to become responsible, caring members of their school and local community, and know how to stay safe and healthy. The good emphasis on teaching the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), supported by attractive new facilities, is providing them with necessary skills to be life-long learners. They have a good understanding about a range of cultures so they are prepared for the diversity of life in British society.

Pupils do well in their lessons. They make good progress and are now achieving above average standards, particularly in English, where they have reaped the benefit of intensive initiatives and good teaching that have improved standards. Although teaching is good, in some lessons teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils' progress in these lessons is slower. The support for those with moderate learning difficulties and others with learning challenges is particularly skilful and enables them to make good progress too.

The curriculum is satisfactory and enhanced by a number of visits and activities. Links made between subjects are not as frequent as they could be, limiting the richness of experience offered. No whole-school programme for those pupils who are gifted and talented has yet been devised to ensure that their individual needs are dealt with. Academic guidance and assessment have certainly improved since the last inspection, but records and monitoring for this group are not fully effective. Pupils are supported by good quality care, guidance and support overall.

Governors know the school thoroughly and provide good support and oversight, holding the school to account well. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and good understanding of its priorities for development. The confidence that the majority of parents have in the headteacher and management of the school is well placed. The improvements made since the last inspection, especially the initiatives that have had such a significant impact on English standards and on assessment, and the strong teamwork evident, all show that the school has a good capacity to improve.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a programme for the pupils identified as gifted and talented and ensure that its effectiveness is monitored and evaluated.
- Ensure there are meaningful links between subjects to enrich pupils' learning.
- Ensure all teachers share high expectations for pupils' work and progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are rising each year. Inspection evidence shows they are now above average. In 2007, pupils left with broadly average standards. This was because, exceptionally, a number of lower attaining pupils joined the school late. Pupils make good progress given their individual starting points, because improved teaching, led by the sharper use of assessment and checking of quality, is accelerating learning. The proportion of higher levels gained in national tests is broadly in line with national averages in mathematics and science. In English it is above average. Pupils make especially good progress in English as a result of successful initiatives, introduced since the last inspection, to improve standards in writing. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning needs make good progress because of the particularly good support they receive.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. 'It's great to be with my friends', said one. Attendance is average. Pupils are keen to learn, courteous and helpful. They get on easily with each other and their teachers and collaborate well, learning from each other. Behaviour is good. Pupils' positive attitudes have helped create a happy and harmonious school. They know how to stay healthy, they say they feel safe and they know they will be helped by staff if they have problems. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take responsibility as prefects and 'peer mediators'. They rightly feel that the school council 'makes a difference' through their contribution. They are learning about important democratic processes such as voting and representing others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, though spiritual awareness is not as strong. Pupils have a good awareness of right and wrong and a strong sense of fairness and justice. They bubble with enthusiasm for local and community activities, and raise funds for good causes. Their academic skills and personal qualities, and the experience gained from such events as Enterprise Week, lay a good foundation for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching contributes substantially to pupils' good personal development, helping them achieve well academically. Parents concur. As one commented, 'The teachers are very approachable. Some are outstanding.' A range of successful strategies are assisting pupils to make better progress than they have in the past. The best lessons include clearly explained learning objectives and imaginative tasks that ignite pupils' enthusiasm so that they really want to learn. As one remarked, 'Lessons are really fun!' Pertinent questioning invigorates lessons and makes pupils think. Teachers know exactly how each pupil is progressing in each subject because the assessment system provides a detailed picture. Teaching in ability groups means that work is usually well matched to the main groups, whether more able, average or less able. Marking is positive and often offers clear guidance as to how pupils can improve their work. All groups are enabled to make good progress but expectations are inconsistent and not always high enough at all levels. When this happens, tasks are insufficiently challenging and pupils' progress slows.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is available and accessible to all. Ability grouping for literacy and numeracy meets needs well, assisting all groups to make good progress. Provision for those identified as gifted and talented is inconsistent and not clearly measured so the school cannot be sure all needs are met. Information and Computer Technology (ICT) is used well to support learning. Planning to enrich learning by linking subjects is not systematic, though occasional popular cross-curricular events take place such as Enterprise Week. Some good initiatives have very recently been introduced, such as the new programme of personal, social and health education. Provision for spiritual development is rather limited. Visitors to school and trips out make learning more enjoyable and relevant. Some trips are residential, promoting good personal development. The arrangements for pupils who find learning difficult support these pupils well. Extra-curricular activities are much enjoyed by the pupils, but are, in the main, limited to sport or other existing curriculum areas, rather than extending pupils' experience.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school attaches high importance to the care, guidance and support of its pupils and its arrangements are good. The credentials of all adults the children regularly meet with are carefully checked. Risk assessment is robust. Staff have been trained to look for any indications of abuse or neglect and collaborate well with outside agencies. Good guidance and training is provided for pupils who take on school responsibilities, for instance as members of the school council. Thorough checks are made on individual pupil progress, enabling teachers to set challenging but appropriate learning targets. When used effectively, these help teachers pitch lessons at the correct levels. A strength of the school's approach is that pupils are well informed about their academic targets and know just what they need to do to improve. Good links are maintained with neighbouring schools, and pupils particularly enjoy reading to younger children in the adjoining Infants school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The leadership team is highly analytical. The four subject leaders work as a very competent team to implement improvements. The management structure gives them a significant dual role. As well as being in charge of subject areas they are all Heads of Year on the Senior Management Team. This means subject concerns reach the decision makers quickly and this works well to raise standards. Monitoring has some good features, such as the overview and the robust checking of teaching and learning. Tracking the quality of provision for particular groups of pupils is less robust. The rigour and consistency with which the individual performance of pupils is evaluated, an improvement since the last inspection, assists the school to use the challenging performance targets it sets. Governance is good. The school knows itself well. Self evaluation is clear and concise and is correctly focused on the benefits for pupils. The school's improvement plan similarly reflects well-focused priorities. All the issues of the last inspection have been dealt with. Some parents rightly feel that

communication is not always as timely as it could be, but it is not surprising that the majority voice their support for the school and its management and recognise the improving trend.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 June 2008

Dear Pupils

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

I want to say a big thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed chatting to so many of you, finding out what you think about your school and seeing how well you are doing in your lessons.

Lots of you told us you think your school is good and we agree with you. Your teachers and the headteacher give you a good education. We especially like the way you learn to be responsible and look after one another and the way the teachers look after you.

You all seem to know the importance of eating sensible food and taking lots of exercise. Do keep that up because it is so important to staying healthy and fit. You told us that you enjoy school.

You work hard and this means you make good progress in your learning. We could see by the work in your books and displays around the school that most of you are reaching the standards expected of you in English, mathematics and science, and a good number of you are exceeding these standards. Well done! Keep trying your best!

There are some things that your school could do better. It needs to think more about what would be the best things to learn for those of you with particular gifts and talents, then check how well it is doing this. It should look at ways to link subjects together more, to help you to see how useful the lessons really are to your future and to help you do as well as you can. It should make sure all the teachers think of more things that you really have to try hard to do, and always expect you to do really well. We think that will help you to do better.

You can help these things to happen by continuing to work hard and enjoy your learning, as we saw you doing. Most of all, we know you are proud of your school. Well done for helping to make it such a friendly and fun place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane

Lead Inspector