

# Squirrels Heath Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102304
<b>Local Authority</b>	Havering
<b>Inspection number</b>	307964
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nick Butt

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	215
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs T Atkinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs C Drew
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Salisbury Road Romford RM2 5TP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01708 446476
<b>Fax number</b>	01708 457090

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: what the school is doing to help more pupils reach the higher levels in writing; creativity within the curriculum; and how involved pupils are in their own learning. The inspector gathered evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average school draws pupils from a mixed residential area. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. An increasing number have speech and language difficulties. The school has awards for developing basic skills and for promoting sport and healthy lifestyles. It shares its site with the junior school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, whose outstanding curriculum contributes particularly well to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Standards are above average and, with the exception in 2006, have been so for many years. A good number of pupils attain the higher levels in reading and mathematics, but fewer manage this in writing. The school is tackling this by providing booster groups for more able pupils in writing, and building in plenty of opportunities for extended writing in the curriculum. Monitoring shows that more pupils are on track to achieve the higher levels this year. All pupils achieve well because of consistently good teaching, and they develop a love of learning. Their lessons excite them as teachers provide imaginative activities that fully involve pupils. Consequently, pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning and are very keen to participate. They work hard at school, and are eager to extend their studies at home. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, particularly noting how much their children enjoy school, and the good level of care they experience. One spoke for many in saying, 'My daughter loves going to school and has come on considerably in her social awareness and her enthusiasm to learn things.'

The headteacher and new deputy head have a real passion and desire to give the pupils the best possible education, and this is apparent in their attention to detail in monitoring the work of the school. A new tracking system clearly shows how each pupil is performing, with any at risk of falling behind identified promptly and supported until they improve. Together with subject leaders, senior leaders gain an accurate view of the school's strengths and needs, and identify the correct priorities for improvement. Teaching has improved as a result of careful observations of lessons, and effective coaching provided where help was required. Now, most lessons are good or better, as teachers have a very clear grasp of what they want pupils to learn, and make use of every opportunity to encourage pupils to extend their learning. The lively curriculum motivates pupils and captivates their imaginations. One morning they arrived at school to find enormous eggs had been laid in the grounds, and this sparked a science-based topic around imaginary creatures called Querks. At the end of several weeks' work on a pirate theme, pupils completed challenges to win portions of a treasure map, which, when put together, located the treasure, everything they needed for a pirate party! The curriculum is also enriched very well by trips to places of interest, visitors to the school such as musicians and artists, and clubs including French and tennis.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They treat one another with respect, and behave impeccably both in class and around the school. They gain a good understanding of different cultures from one another, and through studying parts of the world, such as Madagascar, the focus of a Year 2 topic. One boy commented, 'I like geography because I like knowing about different countries - half of Madagascar is rainforest.' Pupils make healthy choices well and know how to stay safe. The school council is adept at canvassing pupils' views, who recently decided against having a school pet because they didn't think it would be fair on the animal. Most pupils attend well, and the school's absence rate compares favourably with other infant schools. Good links with the neighbouring junior school ensure there is a joint policy regarding term-time holidays and promoting attendance. Pupils contribute well to the community. They take part in sporting and musical events with other schools, and perform their Christmas production for residents of a local care home. They collect shoeboxes for children in need. Pupils have good basic skills by

the time they leave and are well prepared for junior school, brimming with confidence and enthusiastic about learning.

The care, guidance and support offered to pupils is good, with particular strength in helping pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has an effective system in place to support pupils who have speech and language difficulties, with trained assistants running regular programmes for individuals. This means they do not fall behind in their development. The vibrant curriculum, with its focus on speaking and listening and visual stimuli, engages all pupils, but especially reluctant boys and those pupils who are learning English as an additional language. Pupils are set targets for writing and mathematics, but these are not shared with them often enough, or referred to sufficiently in lessons, so that they are not always aware of what they are. Teachers make good use of assessment in lessons to see how well pupils understand the work, with skilful questioning and effective sessions at the end of lessons to review how things are going. Marking of work is consistently helpful, and shows pupils what to do next. Provision for special educational needs is good and is organised well by the coordinator. The impact of programmes of support is measured carefully in order to see how effective they have been, and whether anything else is required. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning through their work with individuals and groups, and help to ensure that good progress is maintained.

The school has made good progress since its last inspection, with much better assessment in the foundation subjects, and improvements to the building and grounds. A sensory garden is a special feature offering a peaceful haven to pupils. Above average standards have been maintained, and teaching has improved. Pupils really love school because the curriculum is so invigorating, and this is helping them to make good progress in their learning. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well, asking searching questions and visiting the school to find out about its work. The school is well placed to go from strength to strength under the strong leadership of its headteacher and senior staff.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enter the school with a wide range of abilities that are broadly what is expected, although their understanding of how to link sounds and letters is poor. They make good progress in the Reception classes, because an excellent curriculum inspires children and focuses upon what they are going to learn. Activities are linked to the main theme, such as the Three Little Pigs, so that pupils may build their own house out of wood, make masks of the wolf and pigs for role-play, and count how many bricks are needed to finish a home. Relationships are very strong, and staff work together extremely well as a team, having a shared understanding of how young children learn. The Foundation Stage is well led by the new coordinator, whose influence is apparent already in better use of the outdoor area and a more consistent and purposeful approach across the classes.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure more pupils attain the higher levels in writing.
- Involve pupils more in their own learning by sharing targets with them regularly, so that they are fully aware of what they have to do to improve.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1
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**

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. Yours is a good school and I did enjoy my visit. This is what I especially like.

- You do well in your lessons and make good progress.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- You thoroughly enjoy school.
- The teaching is good and lessons are fun.
- There are all kinds of exciting activities for you to enjoy, linked together around your topics.
- The school cares for you well.
- There is good leadership from the headteacher and her staff.

Many of you do really well in reading and mathematics, and I would like to see just as many of you excelling in writing. I know your teachers are helping you to do your best and finding ways of letting you write in exciting ways. It would help if they told you more often what your targets were to help you improve your work, so that you could remember them and meet them more quickly. This way you will learn even faster.

Thank you once again for your help. I did enjoy meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. N. Butt

Lead Inspector