

Furze Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101203
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	323422
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	441
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	104
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Glenda Paddle
Headteacher	Mrs Jackie Roberts and Mrs Jackie Barbet
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bennett Road Chadwell Heath Romford RM6 6ES
Telephone number	020 8270 4420
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Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Furze is a large infants' school that draws pupils from a range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average. Almost two thirds of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a higher than average proportion of these pupils have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and those with a statement of special educational need is below the national average. The needs pupils have include speech, language and communication difficulties, autism, and behavioural, emotional and social needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a morning and afternoon Nursery class and four Reception classes. There is, additionally, on the school site the Creative Steps out-of-school club, which is privately managed. The school holds the Activemark and Basic Skills Quality Mark awards. The post of headteacher is shared in a co-headteacher arrangement but one headteacher has been absent owing to illness for part of the current academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for all pupils. A good feature of the school is the quality of care and guidance pupils receive in both their personal and their academic development. This is because staff know them well and their progress is carefully monitored. Most parents are pleased with the school. One wrote, 'I am confident my child will continue to develop positively in the school.' The school has worked hard to develop good links with parents, including a good range of information on the school website. The curriculum has been improved and is now good. It provides a broad range of learning experiences, with carefully planned support for pupils who find learning difficult, which is one of the reasons they make good progress.

At the end of Year 2, the standards attained by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are average. This represents satisfactory progress in light of the average skills and abilities with which pupils leave Reception and the growing number of pupils who enter the school with English as an additional language. Good use of assessment procedures helps teachers identify those pupils who are underachieving. The needs of pupils are assessed carefully and the range of support for those with learning difficulties, or who are learning English, is good, so they make good progress from their starting points. The quality of teaching varies across the school and is satisfactory overall. Teaching support assistants are skilled and well deployed, and work effectively to support pupils who need additional help both in class and in small groups. Staff who have left recently have often been replaced by newly qualified teachers. They are enthusiastic and well supported in developing their teaching skills.

Pupils love their school and relationships between pupils and the adults who care for them are very good. Pupils understand well the importance of being healthy. They feel safe and know that their views are important. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. The school council is a respected voice for pupils and councillors know their role is important. Behaviour is mostly good but sometimes, especially when pupils are not given work that absorbs their interest or is well matched to their needs, they can be distracted and learning time is lost while their attention is refocused. Most teachers manage behaviour carefully but there is variability in the expectations set by teachers of how well pupils should behave, as well as what they can achieve in their lessons.

The senior leadership team work effectively together. They have acted with determination to manage the year-on-year difficulties that have resulted from staff changes and absences, the training of new staff and the building of new teams. The skills of subject leaders, many of whom are new to teaching, are still developing and these leaders are not yet fully effective. Governors are supportive of the school and some are able to ask searching questions. However, they do not offer penetrating challenge to senior leaders and managers. There is effective development of local community links and pupils' awareness of their local and global role as citizens is growing. The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. Issues identified in the last inspection report have been addressed but standards and achievement over time have remained stubbornly difficult to improve. Recently introduced strategies to remedy this are appropriate and are showing early signs of success and this demonstrates the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Early Years Foundation Stage offers children a safe and happy environment. Good routines are established and so children settle quickly and enjoy learning because they are well cared for. They especially enjoy the good opportunities for independent role play, for example acting as construction workers or as police officers in their own police station. Their personal development is good and they are encouraged to be confident and independent. Children join the Nursery and Reception classes with a wide range of abilities, but overall the levels of their skills are below those usually found in children of their age. This is particularly so in language, where a significant number of children are at an early stage of learning English. They make steady progress and, by the time they enter Year 1, their skills are mostly in line with expectations but they lag behind in some elements of language and literacy, as well as in emotional development. Teaching is satisfactory and support staff work as part of a confident and effective team. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has an extensive range of responsibilities in the school and this limits her time in the Nursery to afternoons only, leaving the morning periods to the supervision of support staff. Within the time available to her, she provides good leadership for staff, especially in guiding and supporting newly qualified Reception class teachers. The needs and interests of children are known and observed by staff and additional support is provided when needed. Parents are kept appropriately informed about their children's progress but a few parents expressed a wish to have more regular informal updates on their child's development, especially in the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and accelerate progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Sharpen teaching and learning by raising expectations, managing behaviour consistently and providing greater challenge through well-matched work.
- Improve the skills of middle leaders and governors to ensure they play a full part in school monitoring and evaluation and development planning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter Year 1 with standards similar to those found nationally. Steady progress through Year 2 means that most pupils leave the school with attainments in line with national expectations. This said, standards are not as high as they were at the time of the last inspection in 2006, when they were judged to be good. They dipped sharply in 2007, mainly as a result of staffing instability. There has been some improvement since then, and the school has met its 2009 targets in mathematics and reading, although it fell slightly short in writing. However, there is still some way to go to meet the standards achieved in 2006. The school has rigorous processes for checking each pupil's progress, and for identifying any individuals or groups who might be falling behind. They know, for example, that boys progress more slowly than girls and have made adjustments to their teaching programmes to accelerate boys' learning. This is also true for other groups, such as the gifted and talented, and those learning English as an additional language.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school, as shown by their improved levels of attendance. Relationships at every level are good and pupils know that adults are there to help them. Pupils are very clear about what helps make them healthy, including regular exercise, and this is recognised in the Activemark award held by the school. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Bullying and aggressive behaviour is rare and is dealt with quickly. However, noisy, careless and off-task behaviour does interrupt some lessons and is not always managed effectively by teachers. This is particularly so in lessons where pupils may become bored or where silly behaviour by a few can affect the attention of the whole class and lead to the loss of important learning time. Parents and pupils expressed concern about behaviour and the school, while recognising the recent improvement in behaviour, is aware that further improvement is required. Pupils show maturity and responsibility in their role as school councillors and in the duties they carry out in class. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted soundly. They are encouraged to reflect on the needs of others and are enthusiastic in their support of charities. Appropriate opportunities are planned for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures, especially those represented in their school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are mostly attentive and enjoy sharing ideas. They make good progress where lessons have good pace, expectations of what they can achieve are high and teachers plan interesting tasks that are tailored to their needs. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, for example, a very good range of calculation tasks meant that all the pupils made good progress at their very different levels. At the end of the lesson, the teacher showed high expectations by challenging pupils to explain to the class how they had arrived at their solutions. By contrast, some teaching does little to excite the children's interest and curiosity, and assessment information is not used well to plan interesting tasks for pupils of different abilities. While children work steadily, they do not show the real interest and enthusiasm for their work that lead to the most effective learning. In these circumstances, children's concentration decreases and lessons lose their impact. The quality of teaching for children with particular needs, and especially the reading recovery programme, is an area of strength in the school. Staff have a high level of expertise, so sessions have a clear purpose and pupils grow in skill and confidence.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's self-evaluation is accurate in judging its curriculum to be good. Initiatives, such as the reading recovery programme, developing pupils' oral fluency, and problem solving in mathematics, are appropriate and are beginning to have a visible impact on helping to improve achievement. The sound foundations developed with pupils to help them to learn is recognised in the Basic Skills Quality Mark achieved by the school. There has been a full review of its curriculum, in order to develop better and more creative links between subjects to make learning more interesting for pupils. Information and communication technology has been identified as an area that needs to be improved and to be linked to other curricular subjects. Visitors, such as a theatre group, make a valuable contribution to the curriculum by extending pupils' learning

experiences beyond the classroom. Pupils are very appreciative of the number of after-school clubs provided, including cooking and French. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and provided with the extra challenge they need, and staff provide well for pupils at an early stage of learning English.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff show a strong commitment to pupils' support and care. Pupils feel safe and are confident to seek help when they have problems. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are secure. Close monitoring of attendance has led to an improvement in attendance levels in the current year, although reducing the number of holidays taken in term time remains a focus for the school. The school uses an extensive range of outside agencies well to extend the good care provided in school. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and a range of targets, especially in literacy and numeracy, are used to identify for pupils the next steps in their learning. Pupils generally know their targets and what they have to do to reach them. They say they find targets helpful and sometimes usefully set little targets for themselves. The quality and frequency with which targets are monitored is still variable, but academic guidance for pupils is good overall and improving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers in the school have had to adjust to many changes in recent years. The headteacher, with the strong support of assistant headteachers, has united the staff, who work with enthusiasm to provide a supportive and happy learning environment for all pupils. Newly qualified staff are well supported and some are already carrying out subject-leader roles. The skills of subject leaders are still developing and not all are able to assume the responsibilities for monitoring and driving subjects forward. As a result, the senior leadership team undertakes a wide range of responsibilities, in addition to their strategic planning and monitoring roles. This arrangement is viewed positively by staff and governors but a number of parents were much less positive and found the arrangement confusing. Governors are supportive of the school and, through the link governor arrangement, have a sound understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Most governors do not have the skills to ask searching questions or to monitor developments carefully. They rely on senior leaders and managers to guide the work of the school without offering them appropriate challenge, especially in investigating the achievement of and the standards attained by pupils.

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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?	3
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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

08 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Furze Infants' School, Romford, RM6 6ES

You may remember that a team of inspectors came to visit your school recently. Thank you for being so welcoming. You did such a lot to make our two days so interesting by talking to us and showing us your work. Your parents are pleased with your school and especially grateful for the good care you receive from your teachers and other adults.

Your school gives you a satisfactory standard of education, which means there are good things about your school and some things that could be better. You are making satisfactory progress. You have lots of opportunities to learn things in class and in the many activities and after-school clubs. We were particularly impressed with the way your senior teachers can tell from data how well you are doing and with the support they plan for those of you who are learning English or who find learning difficult. They make sure you have very good help with your reading.

You told us you liked your school and that most people behave well. You know that you can go to adults for help whenever you need it. We also learnt that your school council has many ideas about improving your school.

To make your learning better, we have asked your school to do three things.

- Your teachers should make sure that your lessons help you to improve the progress you are making and the standards you reach at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers can improve your lessons by expecting good things from you in your work and in the way you behave. They can also make sure that the work they set for you is not too difficult and not too easy, so that you make good progress.
- The governors, and the teachers who look after some subjects, could help your headteachers and the senior staff by doing more to check how well things are progressing and to help them plan improvements in your school that will make it even better.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful to us.

Yours faithfully

Norma Ball

Lead Inspector