

Sunnymede Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114910
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	363829
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Archer
Headteacher	Karen Cooke
Date of previous school inspection	8 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 20 lessons, observing 13 teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, and member of the governing body. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers as they arrived with their children at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and school improvement plans. Inspectors analysed 62 parental questionnaires, 224 responses to the pupil survey and 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective has the school's focus been on improving writing?
- What has been the impact of partnerships on the range of pupils' learning experiences and their enjoyment of school?
- How well do teachers generate pace to learning through their questioning and the methods they adopt?

Information about the school

Pupil numbers have fallen to broadly average because of a fall in the birth rate locally. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and the proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Their needs are mostly associated with learning difficulties related to literacy. The school has recently received the Quality in Study Support award at advanced level and has lead Healthy Schools status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Sunnymede is a good school. It is a happy school with a tangible sense of purpose throughout. It has developed some outstanding features under the headteacher's skilled leadership, particularly in relation to pupils' personal development. Outstanding care, guidance and support, good teaching, a rich curriculum and pupils' excellent attitudes to learning enable them to make good progress and reach above average attainment by the end of Year 6.

There is much interesting teaching that moves learning forward at apace by varying activities and through the use of brisk explanations. When teaching is less successful, pupils are not engaged in their learning because questioning is not skilled and teachers do not make enough use of resources and new technology. Teaching is less effective in mathematics than English because not all staff have the confidence and subject expertise to extend pupils' thinking and capture their imaginations. Although there are some high attaining mathematicians, overall progress is slower than in English where the recent emphasis on writing is having a significant impact, particularly by enthusing boys to become creative writers. Marking is thorough but does not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.

By knowing pupils as individuals and the circumstances of their families, the school is able to tailor support to their needs particularly for those who are potentially more vulnerable. This includes directing parents and carers towards support agencies locally. The headteacher is strongly committed to partnership working, recognising the value this brings in providing many activities could not be made available otherwise. The school uses its extensive links with other providers to enrich pupils' daily experiences and to creatively link learning between subjects. Pupils greatly appreciate how this extends sporting opportunities as they have an excellent understanding how exercise and a balanced diet can help them to stay fit and healthy. This is reflected in the school achieving lead Healthy Schools status.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school, which is a view very much echoed by parents and carers. They are confident that any problems they encounter will be solved swiftly and fairly. Their exemplary behaviour contributes much to the harmonious and purposeful atmosphere in school. Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and the part they play in its success, and enjoy learning as shown by their above average attendance. They make an excellent contribution not just to the life of the school, but also to the local and wider community. Their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the great consideration they show towards each other and their appreciation and understanding of the customs of other cultures and religions.

The school has good capacity for further improvement. The headteacher has moved the school forward in many key areas by tackling shortcomings in teaching and focusing on

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making writing more interesting. She is ably supported in this by the deputy headteacher and an increasingly effective team of other leaders. The governing body provides strong strategic leadership and challenge. Staff and the governing body have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but self-evaluation at all levels is not always sufficiently rigorous to support sharply incisive improvement planning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching in order to accelerate progress further by:
 - increasing the level of subject expertise in mathematics
 - engaging pupils more actively in their learning through effective questioning, opportunities for paired talk, and constructive marking and feedback
 - providing systematically planned activities for pupils to develop and apply their information and communication technology skills to enhance learning across subjects.
- Introduce a more rigorous cycle of self-evaluation involving staff, parents and carers, pupils and the governing body which is linked to sharply-defined plans for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

When learning is most effective, particularly in English lessons, pupils work with interest and determination. They concentrate for long periods and persevere with their work most notably in the older classes. Pupils collaborate well when working in pairs and groups, although opportunities are missed to share ideas in discussion with others more often. Pupils develop their writing across subjects and in different contexts. They apply their numeracy to solving problems and investigations, but have less systematically planned opportunities to develop and apply their information and communication technology skills. In the few instances where lessons are less productive and the pupils lose interest, teachers talk too much and do not encourage them to take an active role in their learning.

Pupils are given a firm foundation for success at secondary school and beyond. Year 6 test results rose in 2010 and were significantly above the national average, with results in English slightly higher than in mathematics. Assessment data indicates that this improvement is being maintained with pupils in the current Year 6 on track to meet their challenging targets. This represents continuing good progress from their average attainment on entry to Year 3. There is no difference in progress by ethnicity. Sharply focused additional programmes and the opportunity to work in smaller groups particularly in Year 6, enables pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make similarly good progress. Pupils with particular talents also make good progress overall, but this is sometimes outstanding when participating in events specifically aimed at extending and challenging their thinking.

Pupils respect the feelings of others, reflect on their experiences and understand the consequences of their actions. As a result, relationships at all levels are warm and very friendly. Pupils know who to speak to if they have a problem. They are sharply aware of how to identify and deal with any risks they might face such as when using the internet. Older pupils are particularly interested in ethical issues such as the implications of fair

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trade. Pupils willingly get involved in charitable work including in local, national and international contexts. They participate in a wide range of activities to support everyone in school and peer mediators help pupils to resolve amicably any conflicts that may arise.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Although teaching is good overall, there are some outstanding lessons that move pupils' learning forward very rapidly in calm and well-managed classrooms. Teachers explain the purpose behind each lesson and how pupils' learning will build on from what they have done before. In the most effective lessons, teaching is lively and interesting which captures pupils' attention and motivates them to do well. Grouping pupils in English and mathematics by ability enables teachers to focus their lessons more sharply on their needs, but opportunities are missed at times to adapt and refine this further. The best lessons move forward briskly but time allocations for English and mathematics are overly long and can become unproductive when pupils start to lose concentration. Work is regularly marked and pupils have the opportunity at times to assess their work and that of others. Nevertheless, marking does not consistently provide sufficient feedback for pupils to be clear about how well they are doing and the steps to take to meet their targets.

The curriculum provides good opportunities for learning and a range of exciting experiences which contribute well to pupils' development and well-being. Involvement in 'Creative Partnerships' has stimulated and motivated pupils while acting as a catalyst for

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their writing. Close links between subjects through topics mean 'learning makes sense' according to a Year 6 pupil. The school has been recognised for the quality of its study support and the learning activities provided outside normal lesson time. Experiences are enriched and extended in a wide variety of ways and benefit considerably from the expertise of outside providers. This includes specialist sports coaches, working with a professional football club and activities in partnership with local secondary schools to extend gifted and talented pupils. Pupils attend the wide range of school clubs in large numbers.

The school provides an exceptionally welcoming environment for all pupils. The very close relationship with home means that there is an excellent understanding of the circumstances of pupils and their families. Parents and carers have high levels of confidence when seeking the school's advice. The school's work with families and outside agencies to support potentially vulnerable pupils is excellent. Additional staff and volunteers are deployed very carefully to support individual needs such as in providing one-to-one tuition or listening to reading. Close links with the feeder infant school including joint activities give pupils a trouble-free start to Year 3. Transition arrangements are well thought through and help older pupils move smoothly on to secondary school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's commitment and vision of making school life more interesting and breaking down barriers to learning is shared by staff. The school can point to several examples where it has improved the quality of teaching, and the focus on improving writing has been particularly successful. The harmonious atmosphere in the school is a testament to everyone's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Assessment information is used well to identify and take action over any underachievement, although it is not always analysed effectively to spot emerging patterns or to evaluate accurately the impact of the school's work.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body are rigorous in fulfilling their responsibilities, particularly in relation to safeguarding the pupils. They take an active role in support of the school, but they do not always challenge its leadership sufficiently when setting targets for improvement. The governing body ensures that procedures to protect pupils and ensure the safety of all within the school are robustly implemented. Procedures include carefully vetting all those who work in the school, and ensuring that policies to safeguard the welfare of the pupils are properly implemented.

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The school makes a strong contribution to promoting greater cohesion, in the local and wider community, based on a clear analysis of its context. However, it has not evaluated effectively its actions in order to identify the next steps to take. It engages well with a range of local groups and is developing links to support a school abroad. The school has introduced many activities to strengthen the partnership with home, including using new technology to aid communication. The expertise of others is sought when specialist guidance is needed to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional expertise and close links with other providers including local secondary schools enable the school to provide an extensive range of worthwhile and much valued activities for the pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

A smaller proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than in most primary schools. The level of satisfaction is high in response to all of the questions. Inspection evidence endorses their very positive views about the school particularly that their children are helped to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle and are prepared well for the future. Inspectors investigated the concerns of a small number of parents and carers about how well the school manages behaviour through discussions with staff and pupils, but concluded that behaviour is outstanding. This reflects the views of the majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. Inspectors also judge that the school is increasingly seeking to take account of their views, as is the opinion of the large majority.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sunnymede Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 232 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	61	22	35	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	48	77	14	23	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	36	58	25	40	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	48	28	45	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	32	52	29	47	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	52	28	45	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	69	19	31	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	42	68	20	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	52	27	44	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	45	28	45	4	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	45	26	42	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	37	60	22	35	2	3	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	69	18	29	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sunnymede Junior School, Billericay, CM11 2HL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We know that you enjoy attending school and saw that you work very hard. Inspectors were particularly impressed by your confident answers to their questions. These are our main findings.

Sunnymede Junior School is good because the headteacher, staff and the governing body do their utmost to help you all to succeed.

Excellent care, guidance and support aid your good achievement and exemplary behaviour.

Your exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and above average attendance levels contribute significantly to your progress.

The curriculum provides many most enjoyable experiences for you, including a wide range of clubs and other activities.

The school works very well in partnership with others to support your learning and has formed strong links with your parents and carers.

Teaching is good but better in English than in mathematics, and marking is not used well enough to help you to understand what you need to do to improve.

You develop an excellent understanding of how to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governing body to improve teaching in mathematics, ensure that teachers use questions to make you think more deeply, make better use of computers to support your learning and provide clearer guidance for you through their marking. To help push your achievement up further, we have also asked the school to introduce better systems by which they can judge how well the school is performing. We ask you to continue to work hard and be appreciative of the efforts the school is making to help you to be successful.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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