

# Marks Gate Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101224
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	354962
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alison Thomson

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	261
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Gayler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Frances Bowman-Watson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 June 2008
<b>School address</b>	Rose Lane Romford RM6 5NJ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 12 teachers and 15 lessons, and held meetings with the governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and analysed 62 questionnaires from parents and carers, 101 from pupils and 24 from staff. The team also looked at documents and policies, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils, information the school had collected about the pupils' progress and the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching.

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

- The effectiveness of the actions taken to improve the attainment and progress of White British pupils and those of girls in mathematics and all pupils in writing.
- In lessons, how well teachers use assessment to help pupils improve their work and involve them in assessing their own learning.
- How effective all leaders are at successfully addressing areas of relative underachievement.

## Information about the school

Marks Gate Junior School is of average size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak an additional language, is much higher than average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average, but fewer than average children have a statement of educational needs. The school has Healthy School status for the promotion of healthy lifestyles. There is a breakfast club. Separate after-school childcare provision shares the school site, but this is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection. Since the previous inspection there have been changes in staffing, with a newly restructured leadership team.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Marks Gate Junior School is providing a satisfactory standard of education. Attainment had been falling since the last inspection, but over the last 18 months, the school has put a halt to this and it is now rising once more. It is a very caring and supportive environment and is improving in many areas, helped by the recent restructuring of the school's leadership team. Many aspects of pupils' personal development are good and academic achievement is improving. The vast majority of pupils, parents and carers are very positive about all aspects of the school. These responses from pupils, when asked to describe their school, are typical of many: 'It's one that encourages our abilities and skills' and 'It's so good, there is nothing really wrong with it.'

Attainment is now close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall from their broadly average starting points, but the majority of pupils in all years have accelerated their learning and progress recently. Previous underachievement in writing and that of White British pupils and of girls in mathematics is being addressed well. This is because underachievement is being identified early and good individual and class support put in place to address this. The work in mathematics in Year 6 is an example of where this is having a particularly good impact. Care, guidance and support are good and have contributed well to these better outcomes. Behaviour has improved and is good, making a strong contribution to learning in many lessons.

Attendance, an area for development from the previous inspection, has improved and is now above that found nationally. The school's engagement with parents and carers has improved and is good. This is reflected in the very positive response of the parents' and carers' questionnaires returned during the inspection. Although the specific initiatives to raise standards in mathematics and writing have been successful, the overall quality of teaching remains variable. There is not enough teaching that is consistently good or better at present. Teachers do not always use the most appropriate strategies in teaching and assessment to ensure good learning and progress. Thus, the progress of the pupils is not as good as it could be, or attainment as high as it could be.

The school's leadership team is now bringing about improvements. Self-evaluation is accurate, with strengths and areas for development known well. Appropriate strategies have been put in place to secure improvement. These have resulted in improved attainment and progress in the areas that were previously less strong. However, improvements are not always occurring as fast as they might do. This is because lesson observations currently do not have a sharp enough focus on the pupils' learning. In addition, there has not always been effective communication with all staff so as to promote a good understanding of the strategies for improvement. There is much good

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practice that already exists in school, but some of this is not being identified and shared well enough at present.

Despite these shortcomings, the improvements seen already, particularly the recent accelerated progress of all groups of pupils, indicate that the capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better in order to raise attainment and improve progress, by:
  - making sure that all staff have a clear understanding of the teaching strategies that lead to good learning and progress
  - using assessment data more rigorously to inform lesson planning so that activities always match closely the needs of all pupils
  - always providing clear success criteria for learning so that pupils can be more reflective and involved in checking how well they are doing in lessons
  - ensuring that marking is consistently good in all classes and in all subjects.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management in order to accelerate improvements, by:
  - identifying and sharing more effectively the good practice that already exists within the school
  - improving communication and working more closely with staff to ensure all have a shared understanding of how to bring about improvements
  - observing lessons with a clearer focus on learning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Overall, pupils of all abilities learn satisfactorily and sometimes better. Pupils' behaviour is good and they cooperate well with each other in lessons. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson on plants, pupils worked eagerly in pairs to link the different parts of plants to their functions. Girls' improved performance in mathematics was exemplified in a Year 6 lesson where, along with boys, they made excellent progress, thoroughly enjoying applying their understanding of the properties of shapes to sports' pitches. However, in some lessons, for example in a Year 3 literacy lesson, too few pupils made sufficient progress, as no criteria for success were shared with them and many did not understand whether they were doing well or not. Previous underperformance in writing and that of White British pupils is being successfully addressed and the standards they attain are rising. This was confirmed by looking at pupils' exercise books in all year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, in line with their peers because of well-targeted support, both in lessons and in small groups. This is also true of pupils who do not speak English as their first language.

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Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and towards adults. They enjoy the wide range of opportunities for taking on responsibility and helping others, such as being play leaders, organising games for younger pupils. The school council has a strong voice. Members take their role very seriously, such as liaising with the town council in the design of play equipment in the local park. Pupils have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy and the school's involvement in a walking project resulted in their map being on display at a nearby subway. The breakfast club contributes well to healthy eating and to pupils' improved attendance, which is now above average. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education. This is helped by their well-developed information and communication technology skills and the mature way in which they cooperate with each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils say that they feel very safe and secure in school and say that adults look after them well. They told the inspection team how much they enjoyed school and that learning was 'fun'.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

A strength of the school is the good care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. Right from the start of the day at breakfast club until the end of school, pupils are nurtured well. There are some significant successes in the way in which the school helps pupils overcome difficulties to enable them to achieve satisfactorily

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or better, through very effective support. Strategies to boost attendance are having a positive effect and pupils believe, as do their parents and carers, that the school prepares them effectively for the next stage in their learning. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enhanced by visits to places of interest, events at school and a wide range of clubs. The school rightly recognises that some aspects of the curriculum are in the early stages of development, such as the embedding of literacy and numeracy into other curriculum areas, and links between different subjects, although these are improving. During the inspection, Year 3 pupils had a day where their lessons were taught around the theme of pirates. It was delightful to see the little 'pirates' in costume, enjoying such activities as treasure hunts in the school grounds. Members of staff, similarly attired as pirates, appeared to be enjoying themselves too.

Teachers are enthusiastic and many lessons have interesting activities to ensure that the vast majority of pupils are engaged well in learning. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were seen eagerly calculating the price of tee-shirts. Although work usually caters well for pupils' differing needs, information from assessment data is not always used well enough to support lesson planning. This means that the work is sometimes too easy for some pupils and too difficult for others. However, teaching assistants provide good support that enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language to have access to the curriculum. In the best lessons, teachers explain from the outset what pupils should expect to learn and then involve the pupils themselves in assessing how well they are progressing, but this was not apparent in the majority of lessons seen. The standard of marking is similarly variable. Work is regularly marked, with good use of praise, but there is not a consistent approach to making comments aimed at helping pupils to improve.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The senior leadership team has been strengthened by restructuring and new appointments and this has helped to bring about improvements. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective in their role in overseeing their areas. Governance is satisfactory ? members of the governing body are supportive of the school's work and are becoming more involved in monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. Staff are dedicated and passionate about the school and committed to the welfare and wellbeing of the pupils. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development well and improvements are apparent in areas that were less strong. However, these improvements are not being brought about quickly enough as currently there is good practice within school that is not being shared well enough. Although recent

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initiatives to raise standards have been successful, lesson observations do not always have a close enough focus on how well pupils are learning. In addition, the leadership's vision for improvement has not been made sufficiently clear to all members of staff. Nevertheless, outcomes for pupils are satisfactory.

Safeguarding procedures are good, with clear policies and secure risk-assessment systems. Promotion of community cohesion is good, particularly so locally and with another school in the United Kingdom of a different socio-economic and ethnic make-up. Year 5 pupils told the inspectors how much they enjoyed having pen pals and hearing about life in their school. The school engages well the parents and carers, aided by the work of the family support advisor, and this has helped to raise attendance. Parents and carers agree strongly that the school provides them with good help to enable them support their children's learning, for example through workshops. There is a range of effective partnership involvement, including links with other schools and the local children's centre. These have had a marked effect on enhancing the personal development of all groups of pupils within the school. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory and gaps between different groups of pupils are narrowing. The school achieves satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

Nearly a quarter of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Almost all are extremely positive about all aspects of the school, including the extent to which the school keeps their child safe and how much their child enjoys school. The inspectors agree with these views. A few parents and carers do not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Pupils told the inspectors that they felt that the school deals well with anyone who does not behave properly, and inspectors support this view.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Marks Gate 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 261 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	53	28	45	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	52	28	45	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	45	32	52	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	55	26	42	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	53	26	42	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	53	26	42	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	40	33	53	3	5	1	2
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)	24	39	36	58	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	35	36	58	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	44	27	44	6	10	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	37	33	53	4	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	44	28	45	3	5	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	53	26	42	2	3	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Marks Gate Junior School, Romford RM6 5NJ**

Thank you for making the inspectors feel welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you, both in your lessons and around the school. Your views were very helpful to us. We also enjoyed seeing Year 3 and some of your teachers dressed up as pirates.

We judged that your school is satisfactory and getting better. It was good to see how your work in mathematics and in writing has improved recently. Your attendance has improved and is now above average. Well done! Most of you behave, work and play together sensibly. You have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy and you enjoy roles, such as play leaders and helping younger pupils. Your questionnaires told us that you like all the things that you do at school and most of you feel safe there. They also told us that you feel adults look after you well and are interested in your views.

We have asked your headteacher and senior leaders to help you to reach higher levels of attainment in your work by asking your teachers to help you check up yourselves on how well you are learning. We would like your teachers to use the information from marking to help them plan lessons better, so that you always have work that makes you think, but that is not too difficult. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that improvements happen as quickly as possible by monitoring your lessons more closely and asking your teachers to share good ideas better.

You can help by checking with your teachers if you are unsure if you are doing a good job in each of your activities in class.

We wish you all the best for the future and hope that you continue to enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Alison Thomson

Lead inspector

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