

Pitsea Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114807
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357620
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Sarah Warboys

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Claxton
Headteacher	Alison Blant
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Sixteen lessons were observed and nine teachers seen. Meetings were held with staff, groups of pupils, the governor with responsibility for safeguarding pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books, monitoring and assessment information, policies, documentation for safeguarding pupils, attendance records, teachers' planning, the school's self-evaluation form, the school development plan and minutes of the governing body's meetings. In addition, they looked at the results of 61 parental questionnaires.

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

- Pupils' current levels of attainment and rate of progress in English and mathematics were looked at in depth.
- Inspectors evaluated the extent to which the quality of teaching and use of assessment lead to improved outcomes for pupils.
- They assessed the effectiveness of leaders and managers in measuring the impact of school improvement strategies on outcomes for pupils.
- They evaluated whether the capacity to bring about and sustain improvements is satisfactory.

Information about the school

Pitsea is smaller than the average junior school. An above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and of pupils with statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. These include behavioural, medical and learning difficulties as well as a wide range of other complex needs. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above that found in most schools nationally; these pupils are mainly of Black or Black British African heritage. An average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school runs a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body.

The school has the Basic Skills Award, Healthy School status, Bike-It Silver Award and the Sport England Active Mark. It is part of the Basildon Education Support Trust (BEST), a group of schools that work together to improve outcomes for pupils.

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?**4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to attainment and progress for all groups of pupils.

The school's leadership team has been through a period of instability and this has contributed to a marked decline in attainment and the quality of provision since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment is low and their achievement over the past three years is inadequate. This is because all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not make sufficient progress throughout the school, especially in writing. Few pupils apply literacy skills accurately and confidently or use a fluent, joined script. There is not enough consistently good teaching or good quality feedback to ensure pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need to reach the levels of which they are capable. The curriculum does not include sufficient activities to enthuse pupils to write confidently or to take pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils develop good skills in information and communication technology and music.

Since September 2010, action has been taken to stem the decline and the school is now moving forward. As a result of working in partnership with the local authority and other schools and of having introduced computer programs that stimulate and encourage pupils to practise their skills, there are signs of improvement. Pupils' rates of progress in reading and mathematics have increased recently and attainment in these subjects for current Year 6 pupils is broadly average. Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are developing strategic leadership skills satisfactorily. The school's data-tracking systems and self-evaluation activities are being used more effectively to check the impact of initiatives and determine the steps needed to improve outcomes for pupils. As a consequence, raised attainment in reading and mathematics and an improvement to teaching reflect the school's satisfactory capacity to secure further improvements.

Teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory. In the best lessons, pupils worked enthusiastically in groups to solve problems and use their initiative; however, this is not generally the case. Teachers do not make enough use of their knowledge of pupils' prior learning when they plan for their next steps. This means that pupils' needs are not being met adequately. Pupils are not sufficiently aware of how they can improve their work. Marking praises pupils' efforts but gives insufficient guidance on how they can improve further. Their targets lack the sharp focus on what they need to learn next.

Pastoral care is a particular strength of the school, especially the way in which staff care for the welfare of those whose circumstances may make them most vulnerable. Pupils who have been excluded from other schools settle well and are helped successfully to take

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responsibility for their behaviour. Attendance is above average. The school's safeguarding arrangements are of good quality. Pupils have confidence in adults' ability to look after them and are taught how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have adopted good, healthy lifestyles through the school's achievement of a range of health-associated national awards. Parents and carers appreciate their partnership with the school, especially the new text and email arrangements that have led to better communication with them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress especially in writing by:
 - providing inspirational curricular experiences that capture all pupils' interest and motivate them to write confidently
 - increasing pupils' application of writing skills through a greater knowledge of spelling, grammar and ability to write in a fluent handwriting style.
- By April 2012, improve the quality of assessment, especially the feedback to pupils by:
 - ensuring that marking in pupils' books enables them to understand easily what they have done well and what they need to do to improve
 - making better use of pupils' targets to help them know what to do to attain the next level.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that most lessons are consistently good or better by July 2012. In particular, ensure that all staff:
 - use a variety of teaching strategies which enthuse pupils so they are fully engaged in their learning
 - use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning when planning for what they need to learn next
 - ensure teaching assistants are more actively engaged in supporting pupils' learning, including in small group work
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to work in groups to solve problems.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Pupils make inadequate progress in writing and so are insufficiently prepared for the future. This is because they are not provided with clear enough guidance about how to improve it and they are not systematically taught the handwriting, grammar and spelling skills they need to write accurately and fluently. Progress in mathematics for all pupils has been slower than in English historically, but as a result of recent staff training and a change of teaching strategies, there has been some improvement and attainment in mathematics is now broadly average by the time pupils leave the school. The whole-school calculation policy has been reviewed and this means that there is now a more consistent approach to teaching particular methods throughout the school. Similarly, a recent initiative involving information and communication technology has helped pupils to make broadly satisfactory progress in reading by the time they leave the school.

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There is no significant difference between the progress of different groups of pupils. Although pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in terms of their personal development and make good gains in confidence and self-esteem, too many of these pupils make inadequate progress in their learning by the end of Year 6. This is because, when they are withdrawn from class for additional support, the provision does not sufficiently meet their precise needs.

In their questionnaires, an overwhelming majority of pupils say they enjoy coming to school and this is apparent from their above average attendance. They say that they feel safe in school and are confident that any concerns or worries will be dealt with swiftly. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to keep safe on the internet. Most pupils make healthy choices in school by eating healthy snacks and keep active at break times using the wide range of playground equipment available. Pupils learn and develop physical skills during this time, well supported by adults, who praise and encourage their efforts. The school's achievement of the Bike-It Silver Award and the Sport England Active Mark reflects pupils' increased participation in physical activity.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other. Their singing of an Olympic Song, written specifically for Basildon schools, promotes cultural and spiritual development well. Their understanding about pupils in other national and global communities is limited. Pupils enjoy undertaking a range of responsibilities in school and are proud to be play leaders in Year 6.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

The quality of teaching is variable, with too much being satisfactory. As a result, this is not securing accelerated progress in order to eradicate underachievement. In the best lessons, good relationships allow adults to work with individuals or small groups uninterrupted. Good use of information and communication technology enhances learning because it engages and interests pupils. For example, they enjoy composing their own music using keyboards, and they learn about periods in history through a virtual learning environment. Good use of 'talk partners' means that pupils can articulate and rehearse their ideas before writing.

In other lessons, teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support learning and work is not consistently well matched to pupils' needs. The marking of pupils' work does not regularly provide pupils with enough information to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to move to the next step. Behaviour is largely well managed by adults. However, in some lessons, the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of pupils is not dealt with quickly enough and this limits the learning of others.

The curriculum provides a satisfactory range of experiences for pupils. It is enriched by a range of popular after-school clubs which support pupils' personal development. Currently, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects, as was the case in the last inspection. A recent and more successful strategy has been to organise the curriculum into themed weeks. This has enabled pupils to apply newly acquired basic skills in a more

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relevant and meaningful context. Through its self-evaluation, the school has identified that the curriculum requires a more creative approach to motivate pupils to learn. For example, it has introduced the use of films and a children's newspaper to stimulate pupils' imagination, but it is too soon to see the impact of these initiatives.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is a strength of the school's work. Staff liaise well with a range of professionals from outside agencies in order to meet the needs of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, especially those with specific physical and emotional needs. The school encourages pupils to raise their aspirations for the future through visits to Anglia Ruskin and Cambridge Universities. The breakfast club offers the opportunity to eat a healthy breakfast, and the chance to talk and play with staff and other children.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher returned from a year's secondment at the end of January 2010. During her absence and subsequently, a number of leaders and managers have assumed acting roles and shared responsibilities. Since her return, the headteacher and other leaders and managers have developed the necessary skills to analyse the school's data for tracking pupils' progress and be able to use this information to make appropriate decisions about teaching strategies. For example, changes have been made to the school's arrangements for teaching literacy and numeracy in ability groups and to the deployment of staff in order to meet pupils' needs better. Leaders and managers have established a common sense of purpose among the school community and are now clearly focused on tackling key areas of weakness. Although the key priorities in the school development plan are based on accurate self-evaluation, leaders and managers are not measuring the impact of their actions on outcomes for pupils precisely enough.

Safeguarding practices are a strength in the school's effectiveness in dealing with issues involving child protection. The staff and members of the governing body are clear about policies and procedures to reduce the risk of harm to pupils. The school itself is a cohesive community. While the school reaches out to its local community through music festivals and local events, it does not have sufficient links with schools nationally and internationally in order to develop pupils' understanding of the similarities and differences within a multi-cultural society.

Engagement with parents and carers is good. A local authority project, focused on developing speaking and listening skills, has been particularly successful in raising aspirations and has provided good opportunities for pupils to learn alongside family

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members. Parents and carers attend workshops provided by the school to improve their own literacy and numeracy skills so that they may better support their children. Parental feedback has been positive. The good relationships established with the school have resulted in an increased parental attendance at school events. Parents, carers and other organisations speak highly of the school's efforts to 'go the extra mile' to include pupils, particularly those with specific medical and emotional needs. Although there remain inadequacies in academic attainment and progress, the school's better use of tracking data means that it now promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination satisfactorily.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. Members of the governing body have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are not only increasingly holding the school to account but are also beginning to plan ahead to ensure that sufficient funding and appropriate personnel are in place to support the school's identified priorities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

An above average number of questionnaires were returned, most of which were positive. For those parents and carers that did respond, their satisfaction with the school was higher than the national average in all areas. A number of parents and carers were concerned about whether the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns, and the manner in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence indicates that there are a number of ways in which the school seeks and responds to the views of parents and carers. Inspectors found that on occasion, adults do not deal swiftly enough with inappropriate behaviour and this can have a negative impact on learning. However, the school has revised its behaviour policy, provided support for individual pupils

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and is developing a more consistent approach to behaviour management throughout the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pitsea 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 162 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	49	27	44	4	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	49	27	44	2	3	2	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	41	31	51	5	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	33	37	61	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	39	33	54	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	39	31	51	4	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	39	32	52	4	7	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)	16	26	41	67	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	34	33	54	4	7	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	34	32	52	6	10	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	28	37	61	6	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	34	33	54	5	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	46	28	46	3	5	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



8 July 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Pitsea Junior School, Basildon, SS13 3AB

Thank you for being so welcoming to us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing how you learn, how you get along with one another and how friendly and helpful you are. We particularly enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and listening to you singing your Olympic song. You told us that you feel safe and that staff will deal quickly with any worries you may have. Staff encourage you to keep healthy and many of you keep active at break times, in physical education and make healthy eating choices. We were pleased to see that some of you come to school on your bicycles. We found that your school cares for you well and makes sure that you come to school regularly.

However, we found that your school is not as effective as it ought to be. Too few of you are making as much progress as you should, especially in writing, and the standards you reach are not as high as in most other schools. For this reason, we have given the school a 'notice to improve'. Those in charge of running your school know what needs to be done to improve your learning.

To help you to make better progress in your work, the staff need to:

- make certain that you use your writing skills confidently, especially when you are learning about other subjects
- make your lessons more engaging so that you are inspired to do your best
- give you clear targets that you can achieve and mark your work so that you know what you have done well and what you need to do to improve.

We know you will all want to work hard with your teachers to do these things. We hope you will do very well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Warboys

Lead inspector

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