

The R J Mitchell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131590
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	381371
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2011
Reporting inspector	David Wynford Jones

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sam Berwitz
Headteacher	Barry Read
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited an assembly and 17 lessons, observing eight teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. Inspectors analysed 101 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

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

- How well do teachers use assessment information to plan work to meet the needs of pupils of different ability?
- Do pupils understand their targets and how to achieve them?
- Are pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy promoted effectively across the curriculum?
- Do middle leaders make an effective contribution to the development of the school?

Information about the school

The R J Mitchell Primary School is similar in size to most of its type. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The largest minority ethnic groups are of Indian and Black African heritage. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher to that found in most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is marginally higher than that found nationally. More pupils than average join or leave the school part way through their primary school education. The school holds Healthy Schools status.

The school shares the site with two privately run pre-schools. They were not included in this inspection.

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

This is a good school. Pupils make good progress in their academic and personal development. Central to the school's success is the commitment of all staff, the headteacher and the governing body to ensure pupils are well cared for and that they are provided with a good education. Since the previous inspection, the school has moved forward. Pupils' attainment has risen and their progress progressively accelerated.

Pupils' achievement is good. Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. By the end of Year 6, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average and rising. Attainment in English, particularly in writing, is not as high as in mathematics. There are slight variations in the rate of pupils' progress as they move through the school because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Overall, progress is good. The vast majority of parents and carers are very happy with the school. One wrote, 'My children really enjoy going to school and are very happy.' Others made similar comments.

Generally, teachers' expectations are high and lessons are well planned. The pace in the large majority of lessons is brisk and pupils work with sustained concentration. Pupils behave well and are responsive to their teachers. Teachers consistently share the purpose of the lesson with the pupils so that they are clear how to set about tasks. However, in a few lessons, planning, particularly for English lessons, is not well matched to the needs of all pupils and introductions are overlong. Teachers use assessment well for the most part to challenge pupils, although this is not yet entirely consistent. Marking is mostly informative and provides the pupils with appropriate guidance to reach their literacy and numeracy targets. However, pupils are not routinely reminded of their targets when undertaking work in subjects other than English and mathematics. There are good opportunities for pupils to self-assess their own learning. For example, on Friday mornings, pupils reflect on their achievements for the week, identify what they have enjoyed and where they feel less confident in their learning. Pupils record their thoughts on notes, which are looked at by the teachers and used to help plan the next week's lessons.

The curriculum supports pupils' academic and personal development effectively, except for their understanding of cultures other than their own and those not represented within the immediate community. This is because the school's promotion of community cohesion through links with contrasting areas in this country and globally is underdeveloped. The curriculum is enriched by numerous clubs, visits and

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visitors to the school. Pastoral care is good. Staff ensure that pupils are looked after well and are kept safe. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress as a result.

The senior leadership team and the governing body provide a clear sense of direction. School self-evaluation is good. A detailed analysis of pupils' outcomes has been used well to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. The appropriate priorities to enhance provision and improve outcomes are identified in the school development plan. Middle managers and subject leaders are developing their roles well and they are increasingly involved in the leadership and management of the school. Based on the school's track record, good leadership, the determination of staff and the clear vision for future development, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress in writing by:
 - refining lesson planning to meet the needs of pupils with different starting points and abilities
 - consistently reinforcing pupils' literacy targets and writing skills in lessons other than English
 - sharing the best practice to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching.
- Develop the school's strategy for promoting community cohesion by establishing links with contrasting localities to enhance pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own and those not represented within the immediate community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The large majority of children tend to enter the Reception class with skills and knowledge levels marginally below those typically found in this age group. Throughout the school, pupils respond well to challenge and work hard in lessons. Their speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematical skills are developing well, for example in a Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils shared ideas for writing a biography. They identified key features and discussed how sentences could be constructed to create effect and the impact of using connectives to extend sentences to draw strands together. Similarly, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils worked with sustained concentration to establish why 'all rectangles are quadrilaterals, but not all quadrilaterals are rectangles'. Using geoboards, they created a number of different quadrilaterals. They used mathematical terminology confidently to explain their thinking before meticulously recording their finding in their exercise books.

Pupils' enjoyment of school contributes significantly to their positive attitude towards learning and their improving attendance. They willingly take on responsibilities and undertake voluntary tasks, such as contributing well to the school as members of the

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school council and as house captains. In the playground, older pupils provide support for those who are less confident. Pupils understand the importance of keeping safe and how to avoid accidents, for example, Year 6 pupils spoke confidently about internet safety. They contribute to charity and take part in events beyond the school. They are rightly proud of the locality and the school’s historic links with the Royal Air Force. The vast majority of pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and are able to consider how other people feel. Their good knowledge of healthy living and their keenness to adopt a healthy lifestyle contributed to the school being awarded Healthy Schools status. However, pupils’ knowledge of other cultures is underdeveloped. Consequently, pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable make similar progress to their peers, as do the few at the early stages of learning English. They respond well to additional support provided in lessons and are engaged in their learning. There are no significant differences in the progress of groups of pupils. Pupils joining midway through their primary schooling make similar progress to their peers. Above-average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics and the strengths in their personal development ensure that pupils have a good basis for the next stage in their education and later life.

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	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	3
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

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching is stronger in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, where it is consistently good. Questioning strategies are used effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and to consolidate learning. The sharing of ideas with a talk partner is a regular feature, helping pupils to develop their social skills and their ability to communicate with others. Teachers use the electronic whiteboards confidently to support their teaching. In most lessons, there is a good balance between the teachers' and pupils' contributions, but occasionally introductions are too long and pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet. As a result, pupils of different abilities are not sufficiently challenged and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well and provide good support to individuals and groups. However, they are not always used to best effect at the start and end of lessons. Most teachers use assessments effectively to plan their lessons and pupils' work, though this is better in mathematics than in English. There are many examples of good developmental marking, but teachers do not consistently refer back to previous marking to ensure that the pupils have responded to the advice.

The curriculum is tailored effectively to meet the needs of most pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult. It supports their learning in mathematics and English well. A theme or topic approach enables pupils to make links between subjects, although opportunities to promote and consolidate pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are sometimes missed in other lessons. Good use is made of information and communication technology. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, imaginative use of theme days and theme weeks, and good links with external bodies.

The good level of care contributes significantly to all pupils' learning, but particularly those identified as potentially vulnerable. All pupils are made welcome and included in the life of the school. In the words of one parent, 'My child has special needs. I must say the teachers are wonderful with him.' Systems and structures to ensure pupils' well-being and safety are well established and procedures are followed by all staff. Staff work closely with parents and carers and with a range of agencies to support individual pupils to ensure that their particular needs are met. The school monitors attendance closely and any unexplained absence is followed up promptly. Links with the on-site pre-schools are well established and they help children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the governing body work together well to drive school improvement. Working with the staff, they have accurately evaluated the school’s strengths and identified priorities for improvement. Regular monitoring of the quality of teaching by the headteacher and detailed analysis of pupils’ attainment and progress enable senior staff to monitor the impact of teaching on learning, to raise expectations and, increasingly, to hold staff to account for the progress pupils make. Middle leaders and subject coordinators make a good contribution, but have yet to fully develop their skills in maintaining a whole-school overview of pupils’ attainment and progress.

The governing body ensures that the school’s safeguarding procedures, checks on staff recruitment and procedures for keeping pupils safe are well established in school routines and meet all statutory requirements. School leaders and the governing body promote equality of opportunity effectively. They monitor the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils closely. They ensure that any discrepancies in their performance and any incidents of discrimination are investigated and, where necessary, that action is taken. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. The school is fully involved in the local community and has links with a school in London. Links with contrasting areas in this country and globally to promote pupils’ understanding of other cultures have lapsed.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Good relationships with parents and carers and effective induction procedures help children settle quickly, grow in confidence and develop a positive attitude to learning. Although only a few weeks into their school career, several spoke confidently to the inspectors, reflecting the trust they have gained in the staff and the school environment. Staff use their secure understanding of how young children learn to plan a range of stimulating activities that maintain their interests. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those children choose for themselves. The activities are well matched to the children’s needs and abilities. This in turn leads to the children making good progress.

The classrooms are well organised and provide the children with a stimulating learning environment. Good use is made of the outdoor area to promote learning. However, its potential to promote the children’s knowledge and understanding of the world has not been maximised. The emphasis placed on ensuring the children’s welfare enables all children to experiment, explore and learn within a safe and supportive environment. Children are developing a good understanding of personal hygiene, healthy living and staying safe.

The members of the Early Years Foundation Stage team work together well and have a good understanding of the provision’s strengths and weaknesses. Several changes have been introduced since the relatively recent appointment of the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator. Some have already led to improvements, for example assessment procedures are developing well and are used effectively to monitor children’s progress, to evaluate the curriculum and to inform future planning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was slightly higher than in most primary schools. The very large majority who responded are positive about the school. Nearly all stated that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. A few parents and carers commented that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour and they are not kept sufficiently well informed about their children’s progress. During this inspection, inspectors judged pupils’ behaviour to be good overall. While there are the occasional lapses in pupils’ behaviour, any incidents are dealt with appropriately. The school welcomes parental and carers’ involvement

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in their child's education and is seeking ways to ensure they are fully informed of their child's attainment and progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The R M Mitchell Primary 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 101 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	58	42	42	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	59	59	40	40	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	38	38	51	51	9	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	36	53	53	5	5	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	44	44	47	47	2	2	2	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	35	35	55	55	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	43	52	52	3	3	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)	34	34	54	54	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	38	38	49	49	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	30	50	50	13	13	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	34	51	51	5	5	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	43	43	48	48	6	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	42	42	51	51	6	6	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



17 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The R J Mitchell Primary School, Hornchurch RM12 5PP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school and for completing the questionnaire. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. This has helped us coming to the judgement that The R J Mitchell Primary School provides you with a good education. You clearly enjoy school and want to learn. We were pleased to find that you know how to stay safe and that you are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles. We saw that you behave well and show respect for each other. With all the various things that you do around school and in the local area, we judged that you make a good contribution to the community. However, we did find that your knowledge of the ways of life and the beliefs of people from different cultures is not as well developed as the other strands of your personal development.

You make good progress in your learning. You get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 6, your attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average. The standards you reach tend to be higher in mathematics than in English. It is the writing that is not as strong.

To help you do even better, we have asked the school to make sure that:

- teachers help you improve your writing by checking their lesson plans to make certain that the tasks are just right for you, to remind you about your literacy targets whenever you are writing, and to ensure that they share with you their good ideas to help you improve.
- the school develops links with different places so that you can improve your understanding of how other people live, their beliefs and ways of life.

Please remember, to make your school better, all of you must play your part by always trying your best.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones
Lead inspector

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