

Surrey Square Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	131318
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	381329
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Robin Hammerton HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Springford
Headteacher	Ms Liz Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	
Surrey Square Junior School	11–12 November 2009
Surrey Square Infants' School	24–25 March 2010
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	20–21 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robin Hammerton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Baldry

Additional inspector

Samuel Ofori-Kyereh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed the school's work, including 22 lessons involving 16 teachers, and three assemblies. Two of the lesson observations were made jointly with senior staff. Inspectors met with pupils, governors and staff. They also listened to pupils read and scrutinised in detail a sample of pupils' work, along with documents including the school improvement plan and governing body minutes. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and paid close attention to questionnaires received from staff, pupils and 148 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a large primary school formed from the amalgamation, in January 2011, of the previous infant and junior schools, which shared the building. It is a richly diverse community. Pupils come from many ethnic heritages, of which Black African is the largest, and speak at least 26 languages between them. Two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Slightly more pupils than average are identified as having special educational needs. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The pupil population is stable, with fewer than average pupils leaving the school once they have started. This is a flagship Food for Life school and it holds the Artsmark Gold award.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It has several excellent features. In particular, the leadership provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is exemplary. Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by Year 6 is high and they are well prepared for secondary school. The school is not yet outstanding mainly because there remain some weaknesses in teaching and subject leaders are not fully effective.
- Surrey Square has remarkably quickly become fully established as a successful, united primary school. Governors and senior staff managed the complex amalgamation process very astutely. Senior staff, some newly appointed, provide good coaching for teachers, especially those who are new or have changed year groups.
- The school engages with parents and carers closely. One summed up their overwhelming view: 'I am very happy with this school. The staff are great and always happy to help.'
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well paced and enjoyable. However, there are inconsistencies. When teaching is weaker, teachers dominate the lessons, so pupils do not have to think enough for themselves. There is sometimes too little challenge for some pupils, often the higher attainers.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, feeling safe and well cared for. They behave considerately and work together very constructively. Their progress is good. The very best achievement is found in Reception and upper Key Stage 2. All pupils learn excellently about different cultures and identities.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs are skilfully supported and progress particularly well.
- Subject leaders work enthusiastically together, ensuring pupils have many exciting experiences. However, their subject evaluations and planning are not sufficiently robust. Partly as a result, although the governing body is very effective overall, its members are not always certain about how to tell apart good and outstanding.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring all pupils, especially higher attainers, are always appropriately challenged by the subject content in lessons
 - allowing pupils more consistent opportunities to take responsibility and think for themselves.
- Develop the role and impact of subject leaders by:
 - ensuring they monitor and evaluate pupils' attainment and progress in their subjects in depth using robust mechanisms, thus providing reliable management information for governors and school leaders
 - using such evaluations to plan and target specific improvements in pupils' learning and attainment in each subject.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers are pleased with their children's learning, across all year groups, and the inspection evidence shows they have good reason.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's progress is good and rapidly improving. They enjoy making choices and discuss their learning confidently. Careful assessment and planning by staff ensure children's activities are well suited to their needs and help them learn quickly. For example, reception pupils used time language, such as 'later' and 'next', very accurately when describing their visit to a mosque. Nursery children concentrated well when examining closely sea creatures from the local fishmonger. By the end of Reception, from below-average starting points, children's attainment in all areas is at the national average.

In Key Stage 1, staff are suitably addressing some historic underachievement. Pupils from all groups are making much better progress. Their attainment in the recent national Year 2 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics reached broadly the national average. Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read confidently, with enjoyment. When working out difficult or unknown words, they use good strategies successfully with independence, including checking the meaning and sense of the passage and 'sounding out' using phonics (linking letters and sounds).

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils attain well-above-average standards in English, including reading, and mathematics. This sustains the performance of the former junior school. Many pupils reach or exceed the higher Level 5, with boys doing especially well compared to boys nationally. In lessons, pupils respond thoughtfully to staff questions. The written work of Year 6 pupils shows that they improve their work quickly when considering new ideas or taking close account of helpful marking comments.

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Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs contribute well in lessons and make better progress than similar groups nationally. Those who speak English as an additional language benefit from constant reinforcement by staff of key vocabulary and reminders of how to speak fluently and correctly; consequently they become confident to speak and write with proficiency.

Quality of teaching

Most lessons are well planned and proceed at a brisk pace. Lesson objectives are clear and pupils settle quickly to work. They adeptly work together, showing their strong moral and social development. Teachers' explanations are succinct and efficient, getting the key messages across very effectively. Pupils, along with their parents and carers, strongly feel they learn a lot in lessons and in their many visits out of school. They particularly like the way that staff use everyday, relevant examples to help them understand. They benefit from going outdoors for some lessons – when practising measuring, for example. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive which contributes to good learning. The marking of pupils' work is thorough. In Year 6, it is very helpful to pupils in improving their work. This is less consistently true elsewhere in the school.

Staff and pupils usually assess progress and learning very well during lessons, however, and adapt them accordingly. In an outstanding Year 3 mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher's clear instructions, very challenging practical activities for all pupils and systematic checks on how well pupils were progressing throughout the lesson led to fantastic learning. However, in some other lessons, teachers' lack of subject expertise led to weaker learning. In a satisfactory music lesson, in the same Year 3 class, the teacher engaged all pupils in enjoyable activity using body percussion and instruments, but the expectations of the pupils were mundane and some basic errors were made in the accurate counting of beats and clapping simple rhythms. The teacher dominated, allowing the pupils only limited scope to think for themselves and learn more deeply. This problem was also noted by inspectors at times in several other lessons. In some lessons, learning is good for some groups but not others, especially some higher attainers, because assessments of pupils are not well enough used or checked. For example, in an otherwise successful lesson on telling the time in Key Stage 1, pupils who could already tell the time were insufficiently challenged.

Pupils with special educational needs or who need some additional support are well included, with their needs planned for carefully. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely with them, challenging their learning through good questioning and ensuring their concentration.

Teaching in both Reception classes is outstanding and has supported the younger children's much improved progress. Staff deeply understand the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage and apply them excellently. This is particularly impressive as the accommodation for these classes is poor, something the school has

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well-developed plans to address.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school sets a high bar for behaviour. Its policy is well supported by systematic sanctions and rewards. Pupils are regularly reminded of the rules and expectations through enjoyable activity. Their good behaviour is noticed by staff and regularly rewarded by praise. The school's pastoral team works very proactively with pupils whose circumstances may make them especially vulnerable. School staff work closely and productively with external agencies and families to resolve any social and emotional problems quickly.

Pupils from all groups and backgrounds socialise well in the playground and dining pavilion. They are confident and friendly, showing good moral and social development. They understand risk suitably and can explain how they keep safe. In lessons, even the very youngest pupils work together respectfully, supporting each other's learning effectively. This reflects the success of the school's high-profile and well-communicated core values, and the specific teaching that accompanies them. The school's own 'identity curriculum', which enhances pupils' self-respect and respect for others, also contributes well to pupils' excellent cultural development and their good attitudes to learning and to each other. Visits to local places of worship of many religions are important to this.

Staff, parents and carers and pupils say that behaviour is good, although they do not rate it quite as highly as the other areas they were asked about. A quarter of the pupils who completed questionnaires said that behaviour was good only 'sometimes'. Occasionally, when teaching is less interesting, some pupils can become disruptive but this is stopped quickly and dealt with well.

There is virtually no bullying, or racial or homophobic discrimination. The school takes rare incidents of severe poor behaviour very seriously, logging them carefully and analysing trends. Despite some hard work by staff, attendance remains stubbornly average. The school considers that it needs to renew its work with families in this aspect.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher lead the school superbly in a very effective partnership. They fully involve others and are highly respected by staff, pupils and the community. They speak with one voice, living out strong values and their shared moral purpose. Their leadership ensures that equality, fairness and an absence of discrimination pervade the school. They have huge but realistic ambition for Surrey Square and its community. This is shown in the school's success in gaining the trust and commitment of parents and carers, including well-targeted work with families who might find engaging with the school difficult. Imaginative links they have forged with business and community leaders are very valuable in enhancing the school's work. Pupils are safeguarded carefully.

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The amalgamation has been brilliantly managed. Two formerly disparate schools are now clearly one and, just as clearly, good. This has involved some difficult decisions, great sensitivity and working through demanding processes – all of which have been achieved quickly and successfully. When the headteacher and deputy headteacher were both absent on maternity leave earlier this year, they left the new school with clear improvement plans, which worked well. Other senior staff and governors did sterling work at this time. For example, the new leader for Early Years Foundation Stage continued the transformation of that phase. Other leaders supported staff effectively in further improving their practice. The business manager kept a firm grip on administrative matters. Staff feel trusted, valued and empowered, as well as increasingly accountable for pupils' progress. They work and share together well. The school is rapidly improving and has considerable capacity to improve further.

Although they highlight its improvement and many strengths, the headteacher and deputy headteacher know that there is more to do to create the outstanding school they envisage. They are working hard to continue to improve teaching, for example, and to develop distributed leadership at all levels. Subject leaders show considerable commitment; their role and impact have developed considerably. They have done much to broaden pupils' experiences and enjoyment, as well as participation in clubs and out-of-school-hours activities. However, they are not yet held accountable for standards in their subjects. Although the positive and encouraging subject reports they write claim pupils reach high standards, they have only flimsy evidence for this when there are no national data. Their subject action plans describe very useful activity but do not target or ensure better outcomes for pupils. The whole-school curriculum plan identifies a suitable progression of skills in all subjects, and promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well, but does not provide sufficient subject guidance to preclude occasional unchallenging lessons.

The governing body is well organised and led, fulfilling all of its duties correctly. It has overseen the school's, and its own, amalgamation very successfully. Governors visit the school regularly and ask challenging and pertinent questions. However, the governing body has received the over optimistic subject reports and, partly in consequence, not been sure enough in its own view of some outcomes for pupils, and the quality of provision.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Surrey Square Primary School, London SE17 2JY

Thank you for your very friendly welcome when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you and also hearing your enthusiastic singing in assemblies! You are ready to sing more often in harmony, as well as in unison, which we discussed with staff. Many of you helped us by filling in questionnaires, speaking with us, reading to us or showing us your work. This letter is to tell you what we found out.

We found that your school is good in all respects and excellent in some. It can be hard to join two schools together. The fact that your school is already good is a great achievement. It shows how smartly the school is led by the senior staff and governors. They have done really well and everyone has worked very hard. You have all contributed. Well done! Your behaviour is good and you look after each other well. We were particularly impressed with how you work so well together in lessons. Your school values help with this. Teaching is good. By the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are high. Elsewhere in the school, standards are improving and you are making good progress.

We have made two main suggestions to help the school improve further. These are:

- to make the teaching even better by making some of the lessons and activities more challenging and by giving you all more responsibility and opportunities to be independent learners
- for teachers who lead particular subjects to check how well you are doing in their subjects more clearly so that they know exactly what needs to be done to make your learning better still.

You can help by continuing to work hard together and by making sure that you always attend school on time every day. That's very important.

With best wishes for the future

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

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