

Harold Court Primary School

Church Road, Romford, RM3 0SH

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Standards are above average across the school.
- Teaching is consistently good, and all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Children make rapid progress in the Reception classes because activities are exciting and focus on developing their basic skills.
- Progress in mathematics has sped up in Key Stage 1 because pupils are grouped according to their ability.
- The quality of teaching in music has improved considerably in the past year and standards have risen.
- Most pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They know how to keep safe.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher has helped the school to improve well since its last inspection.
- There have been good gains in pupils' achievement and in the quality of teaching because governors, leaders and managers keep a close check on how the school is doing.
- Training is particularly effective, so that staff share best practice and keep improving their skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in mathematics are not quite as strong as they are in reading and writing.
- Just occasionally teachers do not set work at the right level for pupils in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 21 lessons or parts of lessons, many of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Fourteen teachers and most support staff were seen working with the pupils.
- The inspectors heard pupils read, attended four assemblies and, with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, looked closely at examples of pupils' work.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the school council and other pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, class teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 31 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), a telephone call from a parent and spoke with several parents in the playground.
- The inspection team considered 29 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gill Walley	Additional Inspector
Veronica Young	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed services) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for progress and standards in English and mathematics.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its pupils off site.
- There are plans to increase the number of pupils to two forms of entry.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve the quality of teaching in mathematics to match those in reading and writing by:
 - sharing the successful practice in Key Stage 1 of teaching groups of pupils of similar ability with colleagues in Key Stage 2
 - making sure that work is set at the right level for all pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress over time in Key Stage 1 and standards are above average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Good progress continues in Key Stage 2, although progress is better in reading and writing than it is in mathematics. This is because teachers do not always give pupils hard enough work to do in mathematics.
- A focus on improving the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) means that achievement in reading has risen considerably, and an above-average proportion of pupils performed well in last year's Year 1 reading check, especially boys. Pupils read widely across the school, benefiting from an attractive and well-stocked library. Younger pupils are able to use a variety of approaches to tackle new words and older pupils talk with enthusiasm about the different authors they enjoy reading.
- Children join the Reception classes with a wide range of abilities, but are mostly below those typically found. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because learning is enjoyable and often linked to the class topic. For example, children explored floating and sinking in water and made boats in response to a story about sailing.
- Standards in writing have risen quickly because of staff training in teaching writing more creatively. This has made writing more relevant and exciting for pupils. Their best work is displayed for all to admire, and they have organised their own writing competition and published their own anthology.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are given clear targets to improve their work based on their levels of need and are supported skilfully by well-trained teaching assistants.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium do as well as their peers because the additional funding is spent effectively on extra learning support for them and to enrich their educational experiences, for example through attending the breakfast club and other extra-curricular activities. These pupils achieve well so that their attainment is rising rapidly and average point scores show that standards for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are above those of similar pupils nationally in English and broadly in line in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection and almost all is consistently good. There is also some outstanding teaching.
- Teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to extend their learning. They do not accept the first answer they are given but ask follow-up questions and get pupils to think more deeply.
- Pupils have plenty of chances to discuss their ideas together in pairs or small groups. They learn from one another and often comment on each other's work in helpful ways.
- The strong team of teaching assistants gives invaluable support to pupils in class. The assistants are skilled at teaching phonics and very well trained. New members of the support staff spend time observing a colleague before they get started so they are familiar with the school's methods. As a result, teaching assistants help pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers always make clear to pupils what they are going to be learning and how they can be successful. They use the ends of sessions to check how well pupils have done or to extend their learning further.
- In an outstanding Year 2 literacy lesson, all pupils were engrossed in writing dialogue around the *Cinderella* story, but with the twist that the 'good' characters were 'bad' and the 'bad' characters were 'good'. Pupils enjoyed the novelty of this, and were able to use vibrant language and a variety of forms of punctuation including speech marks.
- Children in the Reception classes are taught well, and are given the chance to explore all areas

of learning both inside and out, through activities both led by adults and chosen by the children themselves. For example, children enjoyed running a 'building site' outside, with plenty of construction material.

- In some classes a very wide range of abilities makes it difficult for teachers to plan work at exactly the right level for all pupils in mathematics, so occasionally pupils are not given enough demanding work to do and their progress slows. Teachers in Key Stage 1 have tackled this matter by grouping pupils according to their abilities and so narrowing the range of ability in any particular set. Whilst only a trial at present, early indications are that this is proving successful and helping pupils' progress to speed up.
- Special groups to support pupils at risk of falling behind in mathematics in Key Stage 2 are having a very positive impact, as pupils benefit from increased attention and are not afraid to make mistakes. Performance information shows that these pupils are making very good progress and the gap with attainment in reading and writing is closing swiftly.
- Work in books shows that pupils achieve well over time and that teaching is good. There is a high level of consistently good practice in the way teachers mark pupils' work, with helpful comments about the next steps they should make in learning. Pupils almost always respond to teachers' comments and act upon them.
- Pupils know their individual targets about how to reach the next level of attainment. Books show that pupils take a pride in their work and their presentation is neat.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good over time and records show that any incidents of misbehaviour have been falling. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning. One pupil said, 'I love reading. The more you read, the more you learn.' Most pupils behave well in class and around the school.
- The school works hard to help the few pupils who find it difficult to behave and is seeing good improvement in the behaviour of some individuals. While most parents who spoke to inspectors were very happy with behaviour, a few expressed concerns, a view also noted in Parent View.
- Most pupils think bullying is not a problem and feel safe at school. Where a very few pupils said they had experienced bullying in the past they were satisfied that teachers had dealt with it well. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as racial bullying or cyber bullying.
- Staff manage behaviour well, and consistently follow the same procedures. This makes classrooms productive and calm and the school an orderly and harmonious community.
- Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep safe. Junior road safety officers are very active in promoting safety and secured sponsorship of high-visibility vests for the whole school from a major motor manufacturer. Pupils also know about keeping safe in the home and when out and about, and had a special assembly reminding them about how to stay safe when using computers.
- Pupils excel at taking responsibility and organising charitable fundraising. For example, classes take it in turns to raise money to sponsor a child in Ethiopia. Commenting on the way pupils are so well organised, a pupil said, 'It's practice for being organised when you're older.'
- Attendance is rising, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school, and is broadly average.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has improved well since its previous inspection because the headteacher and deputy headteacher have been relentless in taking steps to raise achievement and improve teaching.
- Their regular and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' performance mean that they form a very accurate view of the school's work and know how to improve it. They are well supported by an enthusiastic team of other leaders with particular responsibilities who keep a careful eye on pupils' progress in their subjects.
- Improvements to the school's tracking system give leaders and teachers clear information about

how well pupils are doing so that they can act swiftly if anybody is at risk of falling behind.

- Leaders set robust targets for teachers to improve their work and follow these up to check that they are meeting them successfully. Teachers have to earn any pay rises, which are linked to pupils' performance.
- Staff benefit from high quality training, both in school and through visits to schools where there is outstanding practice. This means they have a good understanding of what works, and how to improve what they do. Staff questionnaires show that morale is high. One member of the support staff wrote, 'I feel valued as a member of staff and am pleased to be given plenty of opportunities to become involved in the wider life of the school.'
- The way subjects and topics are taught develops pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness well. Pupils learn about a country of the month, such as Romania, and explore artistic and musical themes in a range of different ways. Excellent teaching of German gives them a good understanding of the German language and culture. Pupils go on plenty of trips, for example to see the ship The Golden Hind, and have many clubs to enjoy.
- Music has improved considerably since the last subject review, with high quality specialist teaching from a local high school head of music and instrumental tuition. Pupils say how much they enjoy performing.
- Links with parents have improved greatly since the last inspection. Parents value receiving electronic mail and support a regular forum to make their views known. They attend workshops on particular subjects such as reading or mathematics, and many volunteers help in school. Parent View shows that while some parents are not happy with the school's work, most are, as well as the vast majority of those who spoke with inspectors.
- The school makes sure that all pupils have equal opportunities and that discrimination is not tolerated in any form. The breakfast club gives pupils a nourishing and calm start to the day. The school fosters good relations with other schools and local churches and businesses.
- The local authority has reduced the level of its support as the school has continued to improve, but offers good quality help to leaders in improving teaching and raising standards, especially in English.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. They know how the performance of pupils compares with all pupils nationally. Governors give the school good support and are good at sharing their expertise and planning for the future, especially in moving towards two forms of entry. They ask searching questions of leaders because they know how the school works, what its strengths are and how it can improve. Governors are involved in setting performance targets for staff and in making sure that they are met. They manage the school's finances carefully and see that nobody receives a pay rise unless they deserve it. They make sure that pupil premium funding is spent on the pupils for whom it is intended and that it makes a difference to their progress. Governors have undertaken considerable training to make sure their skills are finely honed and that they are up to date with the latest developments, especially in safeguarding pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	102278
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	404815

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	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Philpotts
Headteacher	Beverly Swain
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 September 2010
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