

Marks Gate Junior School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 101224 |
| Local Authority | Barking and Dagenham |
| Inspection number | 307617 |
| Inspection date | 9 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Glynis Bradley-Peat |

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 on roll | |
| School | 248 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Linda Foster |
| Headteacher | Mrs Frances Bowman-Watson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 October 2004 |
| School address | Rose Lane Chadwell Heath Romford RM6 5NJ |
| Telephone number | 020 8270 4438 |
| Fax number | 020 8270 4454 |

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Age group | 7-11 |
| Inspection date | 9 June 2008 |
| Inspection number | 307617 |

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The Inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- What impact are leaders and managers having on raising standards for higher attainers?
- What impact are leaders having on raising standards in mathematics and for boys in English?
- What is the school doing to improve attendance and what impact is this having.

Evidence was gathered from the analysis of school documentation, observation of lessons, conversations with learners and discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. Over a third of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds although the percentage of pupils learning English as an additional language is only just above average. The percentage identified with learning difficulties is higher than average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is higher than that usually found.

Key for inspection grades

| | |
|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Marks Gate Junior is an outstanding school where pupils' achievement is excellent. Many of them make exceptional progress when compared to pupils in schools nationally. Standards are above average and learners meet challenging targets in relation to their starting points. Those pupils with speech and language difficulties, or challenges with behaviour, are provided with excellent support and achieve as well as other pupils. The majority of parents are very happy with the work the school does and with how it helps their children to achieve. One wrote, 'I am very pleased with my daughter's progress since she attended Marks Gate Juniors. Her ability and confidence are growing every day.'

The success of the school is no accident. Leadership and management are outstanding. The talented headteacher and her dedicated team are all focused on ensuring that each child has every opportunity to make maximum progress. This is a school where every child really does matter. Self-evaluation is effective if somewhat modest. Subject leaders are functioning very well and have a firm grip on what they need to do to continue to raise standards in their areas of responsibility. There is a particular drive to raise the standards of the higher attainers through problem solving and independent learning. This is having an impact in mathematics particularly. The school is also concentrating its efforts on the achievement of boys in reading, as it has been identified as an area for improvement. The school has invested in the provision of boy-friendly literature and is positively promoting reading through organising visitors to motivate pupils. For example, a visit from a theatre group is planned for next term with a theme to interest boys. The track record of improvement since the last inspection is excellent, demonstrated by the pupils' accelerated progress and achievement. Governors have a clear understanding of what makes the school tick and how they can play their part in maximising achievement for the pupils. There is excellent capacity to improve further.

The school does all it can to involve parents in the life of the school and adopts an open-door policy. It has provided courses for parents on a number of issues which have been well received. Although a large percentage of parents praise the school for its work, some are not fully engaged in ensuring that their children attend school regularly. As a result, attendance levels are below average. The school is tackling this particular issue robustly. For example, the employment of a parent liaison officer is contributing much towards raising attendance levels.

Despite attendance levels, pupils enjoy school a great deal and are appreciative particularly of teachers who put a great deal of their time into extra curricular activities. There are many clubs, including sports, cookery, art and drama and pupils take part enthusiastically. High standards of performance are achieved when the choir, dance and drama clubs perform at festivals. Sporting teams take part in competitions and achieve success. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They feel safe and secure and adopt healthy lifestyles, they talked happily about the food they eat in school and how they try to make the best choices. However, some were critical of school food. They said, 'We would like better food, no more rice with lumps!' Pupils are pleased that the school acts on their views. For example, the school council has ensured that children have more playground equipment and that the toilets have been refurbished. They were particularly happy with the new arrangements for liquid soap! Contributions to the local community are many and varied and pupils enjoy them. Pupils raise money for a number of worthy causes. They presented the residents of a local senior citizens' home with a cheque for money raised during a non-uniform day. Preparation for pupils' economic well-being is excellent and basic skills equip pupils well for the future.

Teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan meticulously and take time to prepare interesting lessons. The use of assessment is excellent. This is because it ensures that teachers build on what pupils already know and identify the steps they need to make to progress towards the next level of attainment. Marking is thorough and pupils appreciate the comments teachers make in their books. Pupils are rewarded when they act upon teachers' written feedback and one said, 'Teacher's comments help us get more team points.' Teachers use questioning well to probe pupils' thinking. They use an excellent variety of short, snappy activities which keep pupils interested and make learning fun. Mathematics teaching is consistently good or better because teachers use excellent resources to consolidate learning. Group and paired work is a strong feature of lessons. In English lessons, writing is demonstrated well by teachers and work that is pitched at a variety of levels challenges all learners.

The outstanding curriculum gives pupils numerous opportunities to excel. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well across the curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to work in a cross curricular way, which has enhanced their learning. For example, in the 'How has Dagenham changed since the 1920s?' unit of work, pupils improved their knowledge and skills through a mixture of history, geography, ICT and English. Pupils' personal, health and social education is excellent. It encourages pupils to eat healthily and lead healthy lifestyles. Excellent visits are organised, including residential activity visits, that greatly enhance their personal development. Visitors to school are valued and contribute much to pupils' learning.

The provision for care, guidance and support is outstanding with assessment and academic guidance being a real strength. This ensures that pupils make excellent progress and that they know exactly what they need to do to achieve their targets. The tracking system is simple, but very effective. Pupils are looked after well and the school has the confidence of parents. Pupils know who to come to if they have any problems and are happy that issues will be dealt with effectively. Learners who are identified as being at risk are cared for well. Safeguarding is secure. Targets are displayed in classrooms for literacy and mathematics and in exercise books. Pupils know them well and what they need to do to reach the next level. They are very well motivated and value their targets. One said, when asked about what happens when they reach their targets, 'Targets mean prizes!'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attendance levels through even closer liaison with parents and carers.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

Overall effectiveness

| | |
|---|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Achievement and standards

| | |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 1 |

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 1 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

| | |
|--|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 1 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 1 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 June 2008

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome in your school recently when I came to inspect it. You are very proud of your school, and quite rightly so. I was very impressed by your behaviour, and how polite and well mannered you all were. I was pleased to learn that you know how to keep safe and healthy. The school council has ensured that some things have changed for the better. You have better playground equipment and the toilets are much improved, complete with liquid soap. I also know that the school council are helping the school to improve school dinners.

You make excellent progress in your school and do well in your tests in maths, English and science. Well done! The reason for your super achievement is the excellent teaching you receive. Your teachers are hard working and make sure that they provide interesting, and often fun things, for you to do in lessons. Your headteacher does a brilliant job and has your success at heart. I think your school is an outstanding school. This means it does lots of things very well, but it needs to make one thing better. You can help with this. Some of you miss too much time from school. If you are ill, you and your parents cannot help it, but there are other times when some of you could have gone to school but your parents took you away on trips and holidays. Missing school stops you from learning, so perhaps some of you can persuade your parents to see that you miss as little as possible.

I'm sure that you will all continue to enjoy your time at Marks Gate and I wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead Inspector