

Pitsea Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114807
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311712
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Woodward
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Blant
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	High Road Pitsea Basildon Essex SS13 3AB
Telephone number	01268 553174
Fax number	01268 559424

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and over a third of pupils have additional learning and/or emotional needs. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small but increasing proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Few pupils have English as an additional language. Far more pupils join and leave the school at different times during the year than is usual. Pupils from Traveller communities attend the school for parts of the year. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is usually below average, but it is well below for some year groups.

The school is part of an Excellence Cluster, which is intended to support schools in raising standards. The school has received the Basic Skills Award, the national Healthy Schools Award and the Sport England Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school, which provides an oasis of calm for many pupils. Elements of the school's work are outstanding. These include the excellent leadership and management, which support extremely high quality care for pupils. The result of these considerable strengths is that pupils' personal development is outstanding, standards are gradually rising and pupils make good progress. The vast majority of parents and carers are very happy with the school and appreciate what staff are doing. One parent wrote that the staff '...are working so hard', and another, 'This has been a great year for my child.'

Pupils' achievement is good. There are examples of individual pupils making very good and occasionally excellent progress, including amongst those with significant learning difficulties or challenging emotional issues. Pupils new to England and those learning English as an additional language settle quickly and make good progress. Pupils from Traveller communities make good progress whilst they are in school. Standards achieved by the end of Year 6 are typically broadly average in mathematics and reading, below average in writing and a little above average in science. This represents an upward trend in standards since the previous inspection, arising from improved teaching and a good and improving curriculum. These successes, together with the exceptionally strong shared leadership in the school, reflect its outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Teaching and learning are good. Staff work very hard to create a safe haven in which pupils rapidly become ready to learn. Teaching assistants and teachers share a strong commitment to raising pupils' aspirations and broadening their horizons. This is evident in their expectations of pupils. Pupils said, 'We work hard here', or, 'You go home tired', and quickly added that they love it. New arrivals watch with wide-eyed amazement as they take in this 'work hard' but enjoyable atmosphere. Although teaching is good overall, there are missed opportunities to identify precisely what pupils at different ability levels are expected to achieve in different parts of the lesson. Staff increasingly plan activities that make meaningful links between subjects but recognise that there is further to go with this. Although pupils often write imaginatively, there are too few opportunities for pupils generally, and particularly for potentially higher attaining pupils, to write in a variety of situations and subjects throughout the day.

Pupils' impressive personal development arises from the outstanding care the school provides. There is a highly consistent approach to ensuring pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This results in pupils being remarkably thoughtful, considerate and tolerant. They enjoy school enormously and embrace responsibilities with maturity. Their exceptional personal development and good academic achievement prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to write in various activities across the full range of subjects throughout the school day.
- Ensure that individual pupils, especially the most able, consistently understand precisely what is expected of them in each part of a lesson.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. The 2007 national test results showed that standards were broadly average, and pupils had made good progress. Pupils made very good progress to reach slightly above average standards in science. This relative strength in science has been maintained successfully, and current Year 6 pupils have made very good progress from lower starting points in reading and science. In these areas, pupils are on track to reach average standards. This has resulted from a successful whole school focus on improving resources and activities for these subjects. One boy explained about reading, 'The school's got me into it now.' Progress has been good in mathematics and satisfactory in writing. The school is rightly placing a very strong emphasis upon improving pupils' writing as standards are below average. There are increased chances for pupils to write using their own ideas and to voice them in preparation for writing. It is too soon for this work to have had a full impact on raising standards across all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school and work commendably hard. They absorb new experiences eagerly and are keen to succeed. They willingly embrace healthy lifestyles, especially through exercise. Extremely positive attitudes result in excellent behaviour from the vast majority and good attendance rates. Pupils' attitudes reflect the school's strong ethos of welcoming all pupils. They are, therefore, impressively friendly, open and confident. They demonstrate considerable tolerance, positively embracing the diversity of cultures beyond their immediate experience as well as within school. There is no shortage of volunteers to be a 'buddy' to new pupils. Frequent opportunities to make new friends as class groups change are welcomed.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils contribute eagerly and thoughtfully to the many activities that enrich their learning, including 'thinking groups', 'Philosophy for Pupils' and assemblies. Pupils make excellent gains in self-awareness and understanding of others, including how to stay safe, through such activities. One girl showed impressive maturity when she explained incidents of misbehaviour by saying, 'I don't think they're bullies, they've just got behaviour problems.' Pupils embrace countless opportunities to take responsibility. Their consistently thoughtful and self-evaluative written comments on work demonstrate the impressive seriousness with which they apply themselves to school life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Strong relationships with teachers and teaching assistants contribute to pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning. Calm and positive strategies communicate high expectations of behaviour, whatever the nature of a child's difficulties. Such strategies ensure that lessons proceed at a good pace. Recent developments in the ways teachers share lesson targets with pupils mean that they understand in general what they are aiming for in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, teachers are not always specific about what pupils of different abilities, especially the most able, are expected to do at different points during the lesson to reach their well-written targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a rich and wide variety of activities. The well-founded emphasis on key literacy and numeracy skills follows the latest national guidance. Resources are chosen and organised well to address pupils' specific needs, particularly for those who find learning hard or who are learning English as an additional language. The extensive programme for personal and social education is highly relevant to pupils' needs. Increasingly effective links are made between subjects, such as with literacy and history, when pupils wrote play-scripts, such as 'Meet the Romans'. The school recognises that there is more to be done, for example by increasing the use of technology in other subjects and in developing writing. Pupils do not write enough in various activities throughout the day. Pupils are enthused by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including residential trips. Their participation in these is high. Outside sports coaches and specialist staff from secondary schools make extensive contributions to sports activities, raising fitness levels and contributing significantly to pupils' enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Excellent pastoral care means this school goes the extra mile to provide pupils with excellent support, enabling them to be ready to learn. The headteacher has led the school's exceptionally strong and effective links with other professional organisations to benefit pupils. These include agencies to support pupils from Traveller communities, pupils with English as an additional language, as well as pupils with significant social and emotional needs. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet the latest national requirements. In this nurturing environment pupils say they feel entirely secure, '...because teachers want to help us and keep us safe'. Under the headteacher's extremely strong leadership, staff share a sense of urgency in helping pupils to overcome difficulties and potential barriers to their learning. Pupils' academic progress is good because each child's learning is checked and analysed fully. Teachers are very skilful at giving pupils verbal feedback about what they have done during a lesson.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding levels of leadership and management are reflected in extremely high staff motivation to do their best for all pupils. This results in the outstanding care and guidance that forms the bedrock of the school's work. The headteacher is passionate about enhancing pupils' chances in life. She has been highly successful in promoting the exceptional teamwork and outstanding governance, which supports her entirely inclusive vision. This is evident in the excellent partnerships that have been both sought and cultivated, such as within the Excellence Cluster of schools. Furthermore, teamwork is helping the school to provide levels of care and support well beyond the norm, but which are of paramount importance to pupils and their families. The result is found in pupils' exceptional personal development and good academic achievement. The school evaluates its own performance rigorously. All staff and governors are fully and impressively involved in reviewing what is working well, and what could be improved. Consequently, priorities for improvement are exceptionally widely shared and understood.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Pitsea Junior School, Pitsea, SS33 3AB

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and hearing your ideas because you were so friendly and welcoming. We were particularly impressed by how hard you work, how keen you are to try new activities and how thoughtful you are about caring for each other. We were also very impressed by your responsible attitudes, whether you have a special job in the office or playground, or are a school councillor. You are particularly good at writing your 's-e-c' (self-evaluation comments). We were also extremely pleased to hear how much you enjoy school. We agree with you that all your teachers and teaching assistants care for you a great deal and want you to do well.

We could see that you make good progress with your learning, especially in science and reading. It was really good to hear about how so many of you are now enjoying books. We have asked the teachers to try to give you even more chances to write during the day in all sorts of lessons. You could help by offering to take notes for your teachers sometimes. We have also asked the teachers to make absolutely clear just what they are hoping each of you will achieve when you are working independently. You can help by carrying on trying at least as hard as you do now and trying to beat your own targets.

Your headteacher, the governors and all the adults in school are a really strong team, working together very hard for your benefit. They are particularly good at enlisting the support of adults from organisations outside the school, to make sure you get even more help.

Once again, thank you for being so helpful to us. We wish you well in the future and hope you always enjoy learning so much.

Yours sincerely

Jill Bavin

Lead inspector