

The R J Mitchell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131590
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	315838
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	194
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stuart Norman
Headteacher	Mr Barry Read
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Tangmere Crescent Hornchurch RM12 5PP
Telephone number	01708 551684
Fax number	01708 556082

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a one-form entry primary school with an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Reception class. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and a few are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is twice the national average. These include autism, moderate learning difficulties, speech and communication difficulties and physical difficulties. A high proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers at RJ Mitchell Primary rightly judge that the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory and they are adamant that they are 'not satisfied with satisfactory'. This is fuelling their drive for further improvement and has resulted in a school where energy and commitment abound. Successes include the dramatic improvement of the facilities, better attendance and rising standards in English. Parents, staff and pupils have been inspired by the headteacher and his passion for the well-being of children. 'From greeting the children at the gate to wiping the rain from the seat of their bicycles at the end of the day, the headteacher proves how much he is in touch', was one parent's approving comment on the impact of his leadership. The school is highly regarded by parents and the local community. It is proud of its historic links with the RAF. Its good care, guidance and support, especially for pupils who are vulnerable or experiencing difficulties, are highly praised by parents. Pupils have an excellent awareness of keeping safe and their good personal development and well-being is assured by the school's focus on values and its uplifting ethos.

Standards at the end of Year 6 have been below average for a number of years. This is because not all older pupils have made satisfactory or better progress. Staff have recognised this and pupils' progress in English has been accelerated. Although standards in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are not as high as they could be, the school rightly judges that progress and achievement is satisfactory overall. Leaders and managers have prioritised the improvements which are needed to ensure all pupils consistently make the progress of which they are capable in these subjects. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory and some aspects are good, but assessments of pupils' progress do not always filter into everyday lessons. This means that opportunities to speed up or extend pupils' learning are sometimes missed. This is changing but new systems and approaches have not yet made a consistent impact on day-to-day activities. The track record of improvement, the shared and wholehearted commitment of governors and staff and the sound leadership and management led by the capable and idealistic headteacher confirm the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children entering Reception have a range of skills and experiences. These are generally as expected for their age. However, for some this is their first experience of education outside of the home, and the proportion of children needing extra help with learning is often high. Staff make good links with parents and children settle very well. Children's interest in learning is high and they respond well to the opportunities to learn, both through play and through more formal activities led by adults. For example, when observed, the class were absorbed in making patterns with a variety of beads, shapes and coloured paper to develop their mathematical thinking. The transformation of the Reception environment includes a spacious outdoor area for children and a well-resourced indoor area where children learn through play-based activities. For example, boys really enjoyed bringing their babies to the 'baby clinic' in the role-play area where they booked X-rays or discussed their concerns with the 'doctor'. As yet, staff do not consistently make the most of the indoor and outdoor spaces by planning activities which stretch all children. As a result children make satisfactory progress in their learning. The development of children's personal skills has been a successful recent focus. Children are well

cared for and develop good relationships with adults and with other children. Their personal skills are above expectations for their age by the time they join Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress to raise standards in mathematics and science.
- Ensure that all teaching is good or better by providing a consistently good level of challenge and independent learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities.
- Make better use of assessment to inform day-to-day teaching and learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Year 2 are generally at least average in reading, writing and mathematics and the current Year 2 pupils are on track to reach or exceed expectations for their age. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been a little below average for a number of years. The school is very aware that, in the past, not all pupils have made enough progress from Year 2 to Year 6 and this is a major focus of its work. This is already having some success. For example, standards have risen in English. Many pupils made good progress, and nearly half were working at higher levels by the end of Year 6. The school is working hard to make the same impact on mathematics and science. This is beginning to make a difference but is not yet consistently doing so. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good gains in their personal, social and emotional well-being. They enjoy coming to school and enjoy the responsibilities and activities it offers. As a result, attendance has improved significantly and is now above average. Pupils' behaviour is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Nearly all pupils understand and can explain the school's values and they can often be seen putting these into practice. In interesting assemblies they learn to reflect on these, and this provides the school with much of its shared ethos. Pupils develop respect for different cultures and are proud that they and their friends are not racist. They also develop a sense of sympathy for those who are less fortunate than themselves and delight in thinking up their own fundraising activities for charities. This makes a good contribution to their developing enterprise skills as well as demonstrating the school's values such as compassion and justice. Their basic skills in English, numeracy and information and communication technology prepare them adequately for their future lives.

Pupils chair the school council and manage its budget. They also have their own team of junior safety monitors and promote an excellent understanding of how to keep safe. They enjoy keeping fit and are determined to eat healthily. As a result, they are enthusiastically awaiting the completion of the school's new kitchen facilities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school accurately judges the quality of its teaching as satisfactory. Teachers are at ease with the material they teach and are good at explaining it to the pupils. Pupils enjoy most lessons and concentrate well. When lessons are particularly interesting and call for their practical participation they learn a lot in a short time. In learning about how a historian goes about his task pupils in one class were confronted with an old, anonymous suitcase of clothes and objects. Their task was to study the artefacts to find out all they could about the suitcase's owner. They were fascinated by the work and gained a good understanding of how historical evidence can be interpreted. In some lessons too little is asked of pupils because teachers depend too heavily on transmitting information rather than encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Pupils who learn quickly often find tasks too easy. Marking is regular and usually tells pupils how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Staff are in the process of making major changes to improve the satisfactory curriculum. New approaches to literacy, mathematics, science and religious education are being implemented, as well as programmes of work which link subjects in ways which help pupils learn more effectively. A historical study of ancient Egypt, for example, links well with geographical learning about the use of maps and atlases. At present the curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to exercise creativity and decision-making, or to engage in the active discussion of ideas. Pupils' learning is broadened by a good range of enrichment activities such as exciting visits, visitors and after-school clubs. One successful example is the cup-stacking club which encourages hand/eye coordination; skilful pupils have represented the school in international competitions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides pupils with a very good quality of pastoral and emotional support. Rigorous systems for promoting good behaviour and effort result in pupils having positive attitudes to learning and being keen to achieve well. Pupils who start at the school at other than the usual times integrate well into the school community. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the good quality of care, guidance and support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties. 'My child has special needs and can't wait to go to school everyday,' wrote one parent. There are good links with outside agencies to support pupils' learning and the home-school worker successfully develops strong links between home and school. 'Staff not only helped my child, but also helped me to cope as well', was one grateful parent's comment. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving as the school enhances its system for setting and sharing targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, deputy and senior staff share an enthusiasm and vision for the development of the school. Staff and governors work well together to carry shared improvement plans forward and there are many strengths in leadership and management. For example, the headteacher provides good leadership, and the school's self-evaluation now identifies weaker areas clearly. Staff have already improved the progress of pupils in English and recognise that more needs to be done in mathematics and science. Relationships with parents are excellent. Processes such as target setting to ensure pupils' consistent and rapid academic progress are weaker, although improvements are underway. Governors are well informed and very active in their support of the school. They give valuable time to helping alongside teachers in the classroom or searching out additional funding and local networks.

Pupils have a good understanding of the school's place in the local and wider community. Links with a school in India and a school in the inner city are giving pupils an insight into diverse communities which may be difficult to experience at first hand. As a result, community cohesion and pupil's understanding of their social responsibilities, are good.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

26 November 2008

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you so much for helping us with the inspection of your school. We were really interested to meet so many of you and to hear all about your school. Just in case we didn't have time to see all of the exciting things that are happening, your headteacher gave us a copy of your new school DVD. We really enjoyed watching it and we are sure you, your teachers and your parents all enjoyed starring in it.

The overall effectiveness of your school is satisfactory and is improving every day because your headteacher and all the adults at the school are 'not satisfied with satisfactory'. They are working very hard to make everything at the school good or excellent. Staff already look after and support you well. This helps you develop your good personal skills. We were particularly impressed with how aware you are of safety issues and how you contribute very well to this. We judged this to be outstanding, so well done to you all.

One aspect of the school that your teachers are keen to change is the rate of progress that you make. They have noted that not all of you make enough progress as you get older. They are working hard on this and have already made a big difference to the progress you make in English. We agree with them that they need to speed up your progress in mathematics and science too. They are planning to make sure this happens by collecting and sharing information on your achievements, and matching this to what they plan for you to do next. This will help to ensure that the activities and the work you do are always just right for you.

You will have noticed that this year your teachers are teaching some of your subjects in different ways. They are already pleased with the difference this is making. So yet more exciting lessons lie ahead of you which we are sure you will enjoy.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Davies

Lead Inspector