

Marks Gate Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101210
Local Authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	323423
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	309
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	Rev Roger Gayler
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy Willmer
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lawn Farm Grove Chadwell Heath Romford RM6 5LL
Telephone number	020 8270 4448
Fax number	020 8270 4449

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Children begin in the Nursery during the September after their third birthday and attend part time in this larger than average school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and for whom English is an additional language, is much higher than is usually found. Just over one quarter of these pupils have limited English when they first start school. The proportion of pupils who experience difficulties learning the basic skills, or who have emotional problems, is about the same as in most schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is about double that found nationally. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the customary times of the year is higher than is usually found. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are in their first year of appointment.

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 school. It has made good progress since its last inspection. Staff work very well as a team under the headteacher's good leadership. A whole-school focus on improving teaching and other aspects of provision has resulted in pupils' attainment rising consistently over the last three years. Pupils achieve well throughout the school and reach average standards. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and praise the staff's commitment and approachability. They refer to the significant improvements that have occurred in the past two years. As one parent writes, 'My son's confidence and ability grow daily thanks to the excellent staff and welcoming surroundings. He is encouraged to try his best in all he does, which reflects in all areas of his school work and behaviour.' Parents rightly indicate that their children are happy at school and make good progress.

Pupils enjoy school. They have a good understanding of healthy and safe living. They wear hats to protect themselves during hot, sunny weather and many regularly take part in the different sports that are provided during play-times and after school. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection because the school has adopted an effective behaviour-management policy, which all staff use consistently. The work of the parent support adviser and the school's inclusion manager, together with the involvement of all staff, contributes effectively to the very good care arrangements for every child and the ready concern for individual families.

Staff provide a good curriculum, with enjoyable learning experiences, although there is scope for more opportunities to develop pupils' computer skills. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have given careful thought to the provision for boys, which has improved boys' attitudes to learning. However, teachers do not always sufficiently use assessment data to fully inform their planning, in order to challenge more able pupils, particularly in mathematics.

Parents feel welcome in school and comfortable with the staff. Staff are working hard to engage parents as partners in the education process so that their children reach their full potential. Attendance has improved substantially as a result of the school's efforts. They are well prepared for their future education.

The governing body is effective and is well informed about the school's work. It holds the school to account at its regular meetings. The good contribution of staff at all levels to the school's development, and the good progress made in the last three years, indicate that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are well below those expected for their age, especially in communication and language. Good leadership and good teaching, which matches work well to children's individual needs, facilitate the children's good progress throughout Nursery and Reception. Children who have limited English on arrival develop their proficiency well through the opportunities provided.

Children are helped to improve their skills in all areas of learning. The interesting curriculum promotes their independence effectively and they make particularly good progress in their personal and emotional development. Children reach the expectations in many areas of their learning, although reading and writing are weaker aspects of their development. This is mainly

because boys in the Nursery and Reception classes are much slower than girls to develop their skills in these areas.

Children settle well into school routines because of the good induction and transition arrangements. Key persons for individual pupils help to sustain good home-school links. The children are well cared for and their personal development is good. Children behave well, respond to instructions and cooperate readily with each other. There is a good balance of indoor and outdoor activities, but the range of the outdoor activities in the Reception classes does not come up to the same high standard as the Nursery children experience.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use of computers across the curriculum so that pupils improve their computer skills.
- Improve the use of assessment so that it is employed more effectively in planning for the more able pupils, particularly in mathematics lessons.
- Increase the opportunities for learning in the Reception classes' outdoor area so that it develops children's skills further across all areas of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Results overall have been improving for the past three years. Pupils' attainment in writing has improved considerably in the last year. This is because an interesting choice of themes and imaginative use of film have captured the attention of boys and motivated them to take more interest in writing. As a result, their writing is now of a higher quality. Pupils whose first language is other than English attain well and did better than similar pupils nationally in 2008. In the main, White British pupils have not attained as well as other groups. As a result, the school is working hard to engage the parents of all the pupils so that they can follow up work at home and help their children more. Pupils who have emotional or learning difficulties make good progress because their progress is monitored very carefully and they are given precise teaching programmes that support their next steps in learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by a substantial improvement in attendance and their regular participation in extra activities. They feel safe and understand how to look after themselves, such as being careful not to touch electrical equipment. They engage in regular exercise and eat fruit and vegetables regularly. The school council contributes to the decisions that the school makes, such as playground arrangements. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils participated enthusiastically in Indian dance sessions during the inspection. Pupils behave well, are sociable and work collaboratively. Most have good attitudes to work. The good development of inter-personal skills has contributed well to their good progress. Pupils are happy to take on extra tasks around the school and are particularly good at clearing away at the end of lessons. They present their work neatly. Pupils have a good understanding of others' needs and raise money regularly for the local hospice.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff have good relationships with pupils and manage them well, which ensures that pupils complete a good amount of work in lessons. This supports their good progress. Teachers use technology effectively to help their explanations before activities begin. Resources are well prepared, ensuring that pupils get on with their activities quickly. Lessons are well planned, but teachers do not always use previous assessments well enough, for example to ensure that able pupils are challenged enough, particularly in mathematics. Teaching assistants are used well to support groups of pupils and the very few who have a limited understanding of English. Plans for these pupils, and for those who find difficulty learning the basic skills, are very clear, well directed at pupils' needs and reviewed regularly. Teachers use individual targets particularly well to improve pupils' writing skills and these have contributed to the big improvement. Marking is up to date and pays particular attention to the purpose of the work and this helps pupils to know how well they have done.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils receive a good grounding in the basic skills which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Good improvements to the provision for writing have included opportunities for pupils to contribute to blogs on the school's website. Nevertheless, generally pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their computer skills or to use them in different subjects. The school provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education, which has contributed effectively to their improved behaviour and emotional development. The curriculum is enriched by special weeks, such as the 'creative week', during which the inspection took place. Pupils learned about different countries in interesting ways, such as making tile patterns using Roman mosaics and making stick puppets to reflect Chinese traditions. They learn a lot from visits to places of interest, such as a toy museum. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are good. There are good opportunities for pupils to study different artists and to work practically.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff take very good care of the pupils. The work of the parent support adviser has been particularly effective in improving attendance and links with parents. Safeguarding, child protection matters and risk assessments are robust. There are very good processes in place to limit harassment and there is very clear logging of the few incidents of misbehaviour that have occurred and the action taken to prevent a recurrence. Very good links with other professional agencies support pupils who experience emotional or specific learning problems well. Vulnerable pupils are carefully monitored and provided for.

Pupils are aware of their targets and know how to improve, but these are not as well developed in mathematics as in English. The school has very good systems to track pupils' progress and these are used effectively to identify pupils who are not making as much progress as they should. There is scope to use the system more profitably to evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Staff are clearly aware of their roles, in which they are pro-active. Subject leaders, for example, have a good grasp of the provision and of pupils' progress in different areas of learning because they regularly check what is happening across the school. Senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and supports teachers' professional development. This combined effort has led to noticeable improvements in standards. Self-evaluation is accurate and takes account of the opinions of a good range of stakeholders. The school development plan is detailed and supports further improvement because there is a clear focus on raising standards.

The governing body is supportive and growing in its ability to challenge and question. Governors visit the school and know its strengths. They are less involved in contributing ideas for further development but appropriate plans are afoot for their greater involvement in this process in the future. An unusual but helpful feature is the appointment of fixed-period 'associate' governors, whose specific skills add to the overall effectiveness of the governors' work. A university lecturer, for example, studied social cohesion in the area and, as a result, the school is working hard to develop improved links with parents and the community generally. The governing body has audited community cohesion provision and is working hard to improve it.

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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?	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?	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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
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?	3
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	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

13 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Marks Gate Infants' School, Romford, RM6 5LL

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We were pleased to meet you and enjoyed our time with you. Thank you also for sharing your work with us and for talking to us about what you do. You attend a good school and make good progress. You reach standards expected for your age by the end of Year 2. You have really done well with your writing this year. Your headteacher and the staff have done well to make a lot of improvements in your school. You obviously enjoy school. You certainly enjoyed the Indian dancing while we were there. You were all so sensible to wear hats in the very hot sunshine when you were outside.

We have asked your school to make three improvements. First, we have asked the teachers to give you more opportunities to develop your computer skills in different subjects. Second, we have asked them to make sure that those of you who find mathematics easier than others are given harder work to do. Third, we have asked the teachers to make the Reception outdoor area more interesting for your learning.

Thank you once again for your help during our visit. We hope that you will continue to work hard and do well in your work.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sudworth

Lead Inspector