

Upminster Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102306
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	323616
Inspection date	30 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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 (total)	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ron Skillet
Headteacher	Miss Emma Field
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2006
School address	St Mary's Lane Upminster RM14 3BS
Telephone number	01708 220453
Fax number	01708 640758

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated:

- what would enable more pupils to reach the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6
- what factors help pupils to develop their personal qualities as well as they do
- how effectively the school promotes community cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from an analysis of pupils' test results, current assessment and tracking data, and observation of lessons. Parent questionnaires, discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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 in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

Upminster is larger than most junior schools. Most pupils join in Year 3, having attended the infant school that is on the same site. Very few pupils join or leave the school during the school year. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, with speech and language needs predominating. The vast majority are of White British heritage. A small minority have non-European backgrounds. The school holds the Sports Mark and Healthy School awards. The headteacher has been in post for two terms.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Upminster Junior is a good school. When pupils join the school in Year 3, their standards are typically well above average. The school, therefore, faces the challenge of sustaining and building on these much higher than normal standards. It meets this well, as most pupils make good academic progress. Pupils excel in their personal development which is outstanding. Parents speak very well of the school. 'The headteacher has already made her mark' and 'My daughter has matured into a well mannered, responsible and confident girl, well able to cope with senior school' are typical of their views. Pupils too say, 'The atmosphere in the school is fantastic!'

In recent years, most pupils have made good academic progress from Year 3 to Year 6. Typically, by the end of Year 6, they have attained standards that are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. While standards dipped in 2008 and were above average, this still represented good progress for these pupils. Pupils in the current Year 6 are firmly on track to attain exceptionally high standards and to sustain the pattern of good progress.

A number of indicators explain why achievement is good rather than outstanding. The school's excellent tracking data show that, while almost two fifths of the pupils reached the higher Level 5 at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, even more could do so. This is particularly so in writing and mathematics; nearly all the more able pupils reached Level 5 in reading but only around three fifths did so in writing and mathematics. The school is already addressing this by raising the profile of writing and by providing more opportunities for problem solving and reasoning in mathematics. However, there is still some way to go. A similar pattern is reflected in the number of average-attaining pupils who successfully make good progress and also reach the higher Level 5. A further indicator is the low number of pupils who make extremely rapid progress. However, this is not the case for pupils who need extra support for their learning. Their progress is outstanding because they are included in all that the school offers and their needs are very carefully identified and addressed through high-quality support. As one parent wrote, 'The support given to my child has been first class and I have been kept well informed about my child's progress at all times.'

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because of good teaching and an effective curriculum. As a member of the school council said, 'Pupils are really focused on their work in this school and want to do well.' Typically, teachers pay good attention to making the purpose of each lesson clear to the pupils, successfully encourage high standards of behaviour, and use information and communication technology well to enliven learning. Good planning ensures that activities are varied and stimulate learning which retains pupils' interests. The pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning also contribute to their good progress.

However, two factors in particular explain why teaching is good rather than outstanding. First, while good teaching predominates when work is carefully matched to the learning needs of pupils of all abilities, there are inconsistencies. Teaching is not yet consistently good in all year groups. In particular, some teachers do not regularly ensure that work is challenging enough, especially for the more able pupils. Pupils themselves say that sometimes the work is too easy for them. Second, while academic guidance is good, there are inconsistencies which slow progress in a few classes. Pupils do have very good targets in their books and know them well; however, there are insufficient constructive comments in the marking of their work to help them make good progress towards their targets. There are examples of marking being done

very well and bringing a real focus to learning. For example, one teacher wrote, 'This is a well-told story. Look at your target now. Next time tell the story in the past tense like your target says and not in the present tense.'

A hallmark of the school is the pupils' impressive personal development. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they have grown into extremely mature and confident individuals for their age. It is very clear that they greatly enjoy school. This is reflected in their excellent attendance and the virtual absence of unkind comments or behaviour. Take-up of the extensive range of clubs and extra-curricular activities on offer, such as the jigsaw, embroidery, knitting and stamp clubs, is extremely high. Impressively, there are 60 pupils in the school orchestra and 150 in the school choir! Productions such as the very successful Year 5 'Victorian Magical Mystical Music Hall' do much to add extra zest and enjoyment to pupils' learning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is excellent because of the very well-planned programme for personal, social and health education. This is also helped by the improved assemblies which have clear moral themes. Pupils' cultural understanding is good. Attendance is consistently high because of the support from parents and the positive steps taken by the school to work with the few families where attendance is sometimes a problem. Pupils know how very important it is to be tolerant and respectful of people who are different from themselves. As one pupil said, 'We are all different and in this school we learn about other people and how to get on with them.' Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe on the internet and when using the roads and of the dangers of drugs and medicines. Pupils are very keen to contribute to the life of the school and high numbers volunteer to be mediators, librarians and classroom monitors. There is a thriving school council which is currently planning and designing an enhanced outdoor area for play and learning. Pupils' preparation for their economic well-being is excellent. This is because of their high level of basic skills, excellent attitudes to learning and the financial skills they acquire when working on projects to develop their business skills.

The school promotes community cohesion well by fostering a very strong sense of community within the school. There are also good links with local churches, parents and other schools, particularly the adjoining infant school and the nearby secondary school. Pupils also have good opportunities to participate in community activities and support a variety of local charities. Within the curriculum, the improved opportunities for pupils to learn about different people around the world, such as Black History Month and a multicultural week, are helping to strengthen their cultural understanding. However, the headteacher is aware that the local area is not typical of many other London boroughs. Consequently, good plans are in place to develop further pupils' appreciation of the diverse cultures in our country and overseas through more first-hand experiences or direct contact.

The headteacher provides an exceptionally strong steer to the work of the school. She has an incisive evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has already put in place the right steps to accelerate pupils' progress. However, these have not yet had time to have their full impact. The governing body is well informed about the school, keeps a close eye on how priorities are dealt with and holds the school to account for its performance. Middle managers have a wide role: they not only look after a year group but also lead and manage a key subject within the curriculum. They have helped to sustain the good progress in English, mathematics and science and are taking good steps to provide more opportunities for creativity and enjoyment within the curriculum. However, the precision with which they track pupils' progress to help bring about improvement in teaching varies. In addition, there are inconsistencies in their

expectations of what is needed to really challenge the more able pupils. For these reasons, the capacity to improve is good rather than outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide middle leaders with further training so that they rigorously address inconsistencies in teaching and marking so as to accelerate the progress of more able pupils, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Strengthen the links with the wider community in this country and overseas, especially those that contrast with the school's immediate environment.

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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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	1

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 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	1
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	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**

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Upminster Junior School, Upminster, RM14 3BS

Thank you for making me welcome when I came to visit. May I particularly thank the school council who were so helpful in answering my questions. I can see why you really enjoy coming to school because it is a good school.

Here are some of the things I liked most about your school.

- Your standards in English, mathematics and science are high and you make good progress. Many of you reach the higher Level 5 by Year 6.
- I liked the atmosphere, the happy smiles on your faces and how well you are focused on your learning.
- I agree with you that the clubs many of you enjoy, and the music and sporting activities you take part in, are excellent.
- You really know how to keep safe and lead healthy lifestyles.
- The adults in the school look after you exceptionally well.
- Pupils who need extra support in their learning make excellent progress.
- I was impressed by how grown-up some of you were for your age. Well done!
- Your behaviour and attendance are excellent. You should be very proud of this.
- Your teachers and other staff look after you and care for you extremely well.
- Your headteacher has already made some very good improvements, is keen for this to continue and is well supported by other staff.

Even in a good school like yours, there are a few things which could be even better. I have asked the teachers and governors to make sure that even more of you reach the higher Level 5 by the end of Year 6 by making teaching even better than it is. In addition, I have asked them to make sure that you learn as much as you can about people who live in different circumstances both in our country and overseas. You can help by really working on your targets and being interested in people outside Upminster who might think differently from you or have different traditions.

Once again, thank you for helping to make my visit such a pleasant one. I wish you all the success you deserve in the future.

Yours faithfully

Alan Jarvis

Lead Inspector