

Sunnymede Junior School

The Meadoway, Billericay, CM11 2HL

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' attainment by the time they leave the school is improving rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics and they make good progress overall.
- Standards in reading are above average and pupils achieve well because teachers check their progress carefully. Pupils say they enjoy their reading.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are given good support in class, and in smaller groups, by well-trained staff.
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are very positive. They talk about their ideas with confidence, listening carefully to their teachers and to each other.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and throughout the school. They are polite and show high levels of respect for others. They feel safe and well looked after.
- Teachers plan lessons well to build on pupils' previous work, explaining carefully what they need to do and what is expected of them. They give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their writing standards.
- Teachers and teaching assistants develop their skills well because of the well-planned training they are given.
- The headteacher, senior staff and the governors promote high standards in the school by setting high expectations and carefully tracking pupils' progress. Subject leaders identify development needs in their areas in good detail.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In mathematics, some pupils in the younger classes do not receive the individual support they need to get them off to a good start in the school.
- Pupils do not develop their skills of extended writing in a wide enough range of subjects.
- The marking of written work in mathematics does not show pupils what they need to do to improve in enough detail. Some pupils are not clear about the targets set for them.
- Teachers do not always identify quickly pupils experiencing difficulties with their understanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, including four joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons, tutor periods and assemblies. They looked at samples of pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils across the age range.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, subject coordinators, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation, school-development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing-body documents, and documents relating to the setting of targets for teachers.
- Inspectors also considered the views expressed in the 29 questionnaires returned by school staff, together with the 49 responses submitted by parents to the online, Parent View, survey.

Inspection team

Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Mason

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sunnymede Junior School is an average-sized school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding allocated by the government for groups of pupils, including those looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The great majority of pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well-below average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving extra support through school action is above average; the proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - give clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve their written work, particularly in mathematics
 - check pupils' understanding carefully throughout lessons to see when more explanation is needed.
- Improve standards in writing and in mathematics by:
 - providing more consistent opportunities for pupils to write at length in a range of subjects
 - offering a greater range of types of support for pupils falling behind in mathematics
 - setting clear expectations for mathematics progress linked to pupils' previous attainment.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment has improved consistently over the past three years and is now above the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. The school has reliable evidence from checking pupils' progress to show that these standards will be maintained or improved for pupils currently in Y6, representing good progress from pupils' different starting points.
- Achievement in reading is good. The proportion of pupils making or exceeding expected progress is in line with national figures. Pupils show excellent attitudes to reading in their 'guided reading' sessions where they concentrate very well on a range of texts and show good initiative in using dictionaries and other resources to help them develop their answers. They say they enjoy reading and make good use of the new library facilities.
- Standards in writing are improving well because the school has planned a good range of opportunities to develop pupils' skills. Regular practice with handwriting has led to good standards in the presentation of written work in a range of subjects. Lessons on spelling with younger pupils build well on their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) so that they show confidence in trying out their ideas of how to spell new words and how to check them. Older pupils show a good awareness of the key terms they have met in work on grammar and write complex sentences with good choices of expressive language. They have worked on a variety of well-chosen texts, although this work needs extending to offer further challenge in writing at length in a range of subjects. More-able pupils are making good progress with a well-above average proportion expected to make more than expected progress in the current Y6.
- Pupils make good progress overall in mathematics. Older pupils receive a good level of challenge in their mathematics groups and show good skill in tackling number problems, persevering well and using appropriate methods to check their answers. Their written work is well organised and they develop their mental mathematics skills well. There is not enough individual support for some weaker pupils in the younger classes so that they do not make as good a start in developing their confidence as they might. Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve further.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium progress at least as well as others in their classes. All of them made expected progress or better in each core subject in 2013. Funding for these pupils has been used well to provide staffing for additional one-to-one support and to provide wider curriculum opportunities to develop their confidence and interest. The gap between the attainment of these pupils and their peers is narrowing overall. In 2013 it was half a level in mathematics and two-thirds of a level in reading and writing. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well.
- Well-managed support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs enables them to make good progress in lessons. They benefit from carefully directed help in class and in one-to-one sessions from teaching assistants, who know them well.
- Pupils' learning skills are well developed. They present their work neatly, speak with confidence and know how to access written and ICT resources. They show good interest in physical education, sport and organising charity work, and participation rates in after school activities are high.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improving well. Staff have benefited from the school's carefully planned work on teacher development. Key policies such as the teaching of reading and planning high expectations for pupils' work are consistently put into practice. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan demanding tasks that interest pupils, and explain carefully what pupils should be able to do by the end of a lesson.
- Questioning is used well to involve pupils in their learning, through giving them opportunities to discuss their ideas informally and gain confidence before answering in front of the whole class. More-able pupils often show good understanding by giving reasons for their answers to questions. Some teachers need to check the understanding of pupils of all abilities more closely during lessons so that they know when they need to give more explanation.
- Lessons are well organised and resources readily available so that learning in class starts promptly. The school's recent development of 'guided reading' sessions has led to examples of outstanding practice where pupils take clear responsibility for organising their own work, and make good progress because the tasks are carefully chosen to develop their reading and comprehension skills well. Classroom display is used effectively to promote key aspects of literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers show high expectations for behaviour in class and apply the school policy consistently to ensure a very positive climate for learning. Teaching assistants contribute strongly to the good working atmosphere in classes by using their detailed knowledge of individual pupils to encourage them and support them in working with good levels of concentration.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work from English lessons in good detail, offering comments that show pupils what needs further attention and setting follow-up tasks where appropriate. The marking of written work in mathematics has less detail. Although calculation errors are generally corrected, teachers' comments rarely give clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. Some pupils need more information on what levels of working they should be aiming for.
- The school's approach to homework has been developed recently after consultation with parents to give pupils opportunities to practise their skills by themselves. Although some parents responding to the inspection survey expressed concerns about homework, the pupils spoke very positively about the arrangements and about the new online mathematics resource in particular. They say they appreciate the help that staff give them in carrying out their tasks in the school's homework club.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They say that they enjoy coming to school and that learning is fun. Their positive attitudes, politeness and good self-control contribute very well to the harmonious working atmosphere in the school. Parents, pupils and staff alike say that behaviour is good and improving.
- Pupils of all ages show good respect to each other and to adults. They look after the buildings well and they move around the site in an orderly, safe and purposeful manner. Break and lunch times are well-organised and the outside areas are well-maintained with pupils showing a good degree of responsibility in organising play equipment and ensuring there is no litter.

- Behaviour in lessons is good and often outstanding. Pupils arrive at lessons on time and settle quickly to their work. They listen well to each other and to the class teacher, following instructions carefully. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare, but occasionally younger pupils allow their attention to wander when the teaching does not involve them fully in whole-class work.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have great confidence in the school's procedures to deal with any bullying incidents or incidents of a racial nature. They say that such incidents are very rare and they feel very safe in the school.
- Attendance has been consistently above average for the past three years. The attendance of different pupil groups and classes is tracked in detail so that support is offered, to pupils who receive the pupil premium funding in particular, when needed. Regular checks and rapid follow-up of causes for concern has meant that only low levels of persistent absence have occurred during this time and the current figures show it now to be even lower.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors share a clear commitment to raise standards and achievement through setting high expectations, regular tracking of pupils' progress and promoting improvements in teaching. These measures have successfully ensured a rapid rise in standards over the past three years.
- Leaders have a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and ensuring there is no discrimination. They are aware that they need to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Senior staff evaluate pupils' progress towards demanding targets carefully each term and, together with the follow-up arrangements to support individual pupils, this is a strength of the school. Regular checks of pupil progress are made each term in all core subjects and there are well-established systems to ensure that all teachers apply the correct standards. The analysis of these results is used well to identify those pupils needing further support and possible weaknesses in teaching.
- The school's arrangements to monitor how well it is doing are well-managed, with clear and appropriate milestones for evaluating progress within the school development plan. The school uses a good range of information to evaluate teachers' performance and staff report that their training needs are met well. Leaders link improvements in mathematics and reading standards to staff training in these areas, for example. Subject leaders plan for developments carefully, with actions based on effective audits of standards in their subjects.
- The school offers a good range of subjects to all pupils including learning French and a large number of sports in after-school clubs, which are well attended. The school has used its government sport funding well to provide coaching for pupils in a wide range of team and individual games including rugby, netball, basketball and dance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for well in school assemblies and the school plans a good range of trips and visits to extend pupils' cultural experiences.
- The support for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those in receipt of the pupil premium is well managed and their progress is now good. The impact of individual and group support from specialist staff together with support in class is monitored carefully by the coordinator.

- The local authority has arranged for leadership and management support to the school and also supported it with external subject reviews. The school has obtained further training support from the local cluster of schools.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet all national requirements and are highly effective, with staff well trained in both welfare and safety procedures. Incidents are logged carefully and the school is prompt in making sure families and external agencies are promptly involved in any follow up action.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about strengths and development areas in the school. They have a good understanding of school performance data and offer very good support and challenge to school leaders through their questioning at meetings.
 - The regular programme of school visits by governors is well documented. They have a detailed awareness of the school’s self-evaluation outcomes and monitor the resulting action plans well.
 - Governors know what the school is doing to develop teaching and to tackle any underperformance. They oversee the procedures for teachers’ pay progression and took an active part in trialling the new arrangements.
 - Expenditure on the pupil premium is monitored regularly at meetings and governors know how well these pupils achieve.
 - Governors contribute well to the school’s links with parents, developing the parent partnership and publishing an informative newsletter.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114910
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	444124

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Burgess
Headteacher	Ronnie Branch
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2011
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