

Emerson Park Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137414
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	386087
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Calvin Pike

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	997
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Tilbury
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Walsh
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Wych Elm Road Hornchurch Essex RM11 3AD
Telephone number	01708 475285
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 41 lessons, taught by 40 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including that related to safeguarding, 175 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The factors that have led to improvements in standards of attainment.
- The achievement of boys and girls and different groups of pupils.
- The consistency of the quality of teaching across the academy.

Information about the school

Emerson Park Academy opened in September 2011 in the same accommodation as its predecessor school. It is average in size with boys outnumbering girls in all year groups. The vast majority of its pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the small number from other ethnic groups, the proportion speaking English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is approximately half the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but the number with statements of special educational needs is below average. The largest group of learners that receive support include those who have specific learning needs, moderate learning needs and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The academy has specialist status for sports. It also holds the Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold award and has Healthy Schools status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Emerson Park is a good academy. One factor in its success is its outstanding partnerships in promoting learning. These have led to cooperative working with other schools which have helped to improve the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Another factor is the academy's excellent engagement with parents and carers, including through its productive parent-teacher association. Parents and carers are informed about the academy's work and their views are sought regularly. Through its website a large proportion can monitor how well their child is doing at any time. The vast majority of parents and carers appreciate the academy's work. As one commented, 'I could not be happier with our choice of school.'

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good. This contributes well to the academy's productive ethos. The good curriculum offers significant breadth of provision. Well-conceived intervention strategies are effective in supporting pupils individually where necessary. Most pupils are happy and behave well. They feel safe because the academy implements its good safeguarding procedures very effectively. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning; the vast majority carry on in education when they leave Emerson Park. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in pupils' relationships, their respect for and consideration of others' views, and their confidence in discussing cultural and moral issues.

Pupils achieve well. Reflecting the academy's inclusive approach, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, along with the small number of pupils from ethnic backgrounds, are supported effectively and make good progress. Examination results have risen rapidly and are above national averages. Mathematics and English outcomes have improved significantly although too few higher attaining pupils secure higher grades. Standards have risen because most teaching is good and pupils are keen to learn, especially where they can be actively involved in their work. Although teaching is good overall and some of it is outstanding, the way teachers plan lessons and use assessment information to enhance learning is variable in its effectiveness.

Improvements are the result of clear and focused leadership. The headteacher provides considerable drive and ambition for the academy, supported by a cohesive senior leadership team and a constructively challenging governing body. Planning is clearly based on good quality information. Monitoring is regular but not sufficiently rigorous to secure consistent practice and a high proportion of good teaching in all subjects. Good self-evaluation processes give leaders and governors a clear understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development. Relatively new

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plans for the promotion of community cohesion are being developed but their implementation and the evaluation of their impact are too limited. There have been significant improvements in academic standards and almost all aspects of the school are good and some are outstanding. These demonstrate the academy's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make full use of pupils' achievement when they plan and teach their lessons so that everyone is challenged fully, especially higher attaining pupils
 - all teachers check pupils' learning regularly during lessons and shape activities to match different rates of learning as the lesson proceeds
 - the monitoring of teaching, and feedback to staff, focus more sharply on how effectively teachers plan and teach lessons to match the full range of pupils' needs.
- Fully implement plans to develop community cohesion further and evaluate their impact in order to help pupils become even more aware of people from different backgrounds in the United Kingdom and further afield.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils join the academy with above average levels of attainment. Although rates of progress have been slow previously, these have improved rapidly in recent years so that pupils' good progress led to well-above average attainment in 2011. A large proportion of pupils gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Almost everyone leaves with at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to G. Pupils achieve consistently well in mathematics. Their achievement in English, where standards were previously lower, has improved significantly in recent years and is now good. Pupils achieve well in the specialist subject of physical education. Achievement in science is consistently good.

At this inclusive academy, most pupils do well. Examination results of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are similar to those of their peers. Although some more-able pupils make good progress, the proportion who do so could be increased. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similarly good progress because the academy provides them with well-targeted support. Pupils' current learning mirrors, and in some lessons exceeds, the improvements shown in the most recent examination results. They have positive attitudes and enjoy their work. As one pupil commented in a Year 7 geography lesson, 'The teacher makes it fun so that it is easy to learn.' Where there is a clear focus on what pupils are expected to learn, outcomes are strongest. In a Year 10 science lesson on tectonic plates, the teacher's

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skilled questioning and strong subject knowledge enabled pupils to make outstanding progress as they used examination criteria to evaluate their own work, identify misunderstandings and contribute to class discussions that reinforced their knowledge, skills and confidence.

Parents and carers are in strong agreement that pupils feel safe at Emerson Park. Pupils confirmed the same view in discussions and this was supported by the very good relationships seen at the academy. Combined with the academy's improved provision, this has contributed to improvements in attendance rates which are above average and exclusions are rare. The academy provides good support for a healthy lifestyle, as reflected in its Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards; participation rates in sport are very high and a range of healthy school meals is available and chosen by pupils. Pupils' contribute well to the academy and wider community. They play a range of roles through a number of projects. For example, pupils are elected to house or academy committees which give them a voice in decision-making; sports leaders support teaching at local primary schools and pupils promote Lunch Box at Christmas or raise funds for a Breast Cancer charity. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, Year 10 pupils in science reflected sensitively on the ethical issues associated with the implications of amniotic fluid testing during pregnancy, and in an outstanding drama lesson they responded well to images of soldiers returning from war, linked to the theme of remembrance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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The good working relationships between staff and pupils help to build pupils’ confidence. Common features which contribute to good and sometimes outstanding learning are teachers’ high expectations and detailed planning that takes account of pupils’ individual achievement and learning needs. In the most successful lessons, pupils are very aware of what they are expected to learn, teachers regularly review the pace of learning and adjust the challenge to match pupils’ achievement so that all pupils progress rapidly. For example, in a Year 10 physical education lesson pupils knew the rugby skills they would be developing from the outset. Excellent assessment and regular feedback during the lesson then enabled all pupils to improve their skills well and understand how best to apply them more effectively and safely. Teaching, however, is not as consistently effective where the academy’s robust information about pupils’ previous progress is not used effectively to plan learning that meets the full range of pupils’ needs.

The curriculum has a good balance of academic and vocational courses. It has been improved in recent years to include cultural studies in Key Stage 3 and an in-house science course to develop knowledge further in preparation for Years 10 and 11. Pupils’ skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are underdeveloped compared with their literacy and numeracy skills. This is because not all subjects incorporate opportunities to develop ICT skills within lessons. A high proportion of pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities during lunchtimes and after school. These reflect the academy’s specialism as many of these involve sports and have a good impact on the pupils’ healthy lifestyles.

Pupils are supported and cared for well. Those with particularly significant needs receive excellent help. This enables them to achieve well. Robust systems are in place that have led to the academy’s above average attendance rates and reduced persistent absenteeism. There are well developed arrangements to ensure pupils arriving from primary schools, and others new to the academy, settle quickly and happily. Equally supportive procedures help to ensure pupils select suitable Key Stage 4 courses and prepare for further study at the end of Year 11.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, together with a strong and effective senior leadership team and many middle managers, has driven improvements well. Staff and governors have

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high ambitions for the academy. Recent examination results indicate the effectiveness of their efforts. Governors provide good support and challenge academy leaders effectively.

A range of initiatives has been successfully implemented to raise standards and the quality of provision. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the academy’s work are firmly established. These give staff and governors a clear understanding of the academy’s strengths and areas for development, except in relation to the evaluation of community cohesion plans which are currently underdeveloped. Consequently, although much is done to forge links with and contribute to the local and wider community, pupils are insufficiently aware of people from different backgrounds in the United Kingdom and further afield. Although good, systems for monitoring are not sharp enough to ensure all departments are able to raise the quality of provision to outstanding. The academy has recognised this and plans are in place to strengthen monitoring systems this year. The way in which senior leaders track pupils’ progress in order to set appropriate future targets is well developed. Information about pupils’ achievements is collected regularly and is very accurate.

The academy promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well. Consequently, differences in the performance of different groups of pupils have been identified and tackled so that all achieve well. As a result, boys’ achievement has improved and the gap between boys’ and girls’ attainment has been reduced.

The academy’s outstanding partnerships with other schools have helped Emerson Park to extend continuing professional development opportunities for teachers, improve systems for evaluation and raise standards. Similarly, work with a local special school has led to pupils and teachers sharing learning experiences and to an understanding of each other’s needs, as observed in a science lesson which pupils of both schools enjoyed and in which they worked well together. The academy’s procedures for safeguarding meet government requirements well. Very effective partnerships with a range of agencies ensure that concerns about individual pupils are followed up immediately and effectively.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and	2

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tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The views of the parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. The vast majority considered that their child enjoys school, is kept safe and makes good progress. A very small minority of parents and carers did not consider that the academy supported them in helping their child learn, helped children adopt a healthy lifestyle or dealt well with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged levels of information and support to parents to be outstanding, that the academy’s provision encourages pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles well, and that systems for dealing with unacceptable behaviour are good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Emerson Park School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 175 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 997 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	43	87	50	5	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	87	50	82	47	4	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	58	33	94	54	19	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	42	88	50	7	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	34	100	57	10	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	49	28	93	53	22	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	21	110	63	20	11	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	58	33	96	55	7	4	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	61	35	95	54	13	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	31	93	53	17	10	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	24	108	62	12	7	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	67	38	94	54	7	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	82	47	83	47	8	5	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Emerson Park School, Hornchurch RM11 3AD

Thank you for your help and taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to tell you about our main findings.

We judged Emerson Park to be a good academy; a number of things about it are excellent. The partnerships your academy has with other schools and agencies help promote your learning and well-being exceptionally well. Its safeguarding procedures to protect you are very effective and contribute to your feeling safe. Ways in which the academy engages your parents and carers are excellent, so they can know how well you are doing and how to help you in your studies. In spite of this we saw that the academy can improve how it helps you understand more fully different communities around the world. For this reason, we asked staff to give more attention to this area and to evaluate how well it improves your knowledge and understanding.

What is provided at Emerson Park has improved and helps you leave with good examination results. This is because teaching is usually good and, as you told us, it is sometimes outstanding. Your positive attitudes to learning and your good relationships with staff and other pupils help to make lessons enjoyable and the atmosphere in the academy very friendly. In some lessons teaching is less effective. We have asked your staff to make more lessons good and outstanding by using the information they have about how well you are doing to plan lessons that challenge you fully so that you can always achieve well. We have also asked senior staff and managers to focus more closely on this aspect of the academy's work when they check to make sure this is happening in all subjects.

The headteacher and his staff are very ambitious for the academy to do well for you. They are working hard to make it outstanding. They have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development, and know what to do next to improve it.

Yours sincerely

Calvin Pike
Lead inspector

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