

# Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	117292
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379389
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	David Scott

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	233
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dilys Clark
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Butterworth
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14–15 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Wisden Road Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 5JD
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## Introduction

Inspection team

David Scott

Additional inspector

Gill Ellyard

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed teaching and learning in 16 part-lessons, amounting to seven hours in total, seeing all eight teachers, and half of these were accompanied by members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with the headteacher, a member of the governing body, staff and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and policies. They also analysed questionnaires from 83 parents, 100 pupils and 28 staff. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

## Information about the school

Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery School is similar in size to most primary schools. The largest group of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic heritages is below average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. Boys outnumber girls. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average, these being mainly moderate and specific learning difficulties. The school has been above government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress, for two out of the last three years with a dip in the 2011 results. The school runs its own breakfast club.

The school has gained the Artsmark Gold award and has recently been re-accredited for the Early Years Foundation Stage Hertfordshire Quality Standard.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery school provides a good standard of education. As one parent commented, 'Trotts Hill is a lovely school and our family are proud to call it "our school"'.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start in their early reading and communication skills. By the end of Year 6 they achieve well in their learning and behaviour is good because the school has very high expectations of them. Staff work effectively to eradicate any differences in the achievement of groups of children.
- Typically teaching is good and sometimes better, and regularly enthuses pupils with a love of learning or appreciation of how learning relates to their present and future lives. Nevertheless, in some lessons teachers do not engage pupils consistently as active participants, or make sufficient use of probing questioning.
- Whatever their backgrounds, pupils work well together and enjoy good relationships with staff. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure, attend well and their attitudes to learning are good.
- Pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity are promoted particularly well through attractive classroom displays and themed events such as the 'Spirited Arts Week'.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together to guide and support staff. They know the strengths of the school and their determination to raise achievement for all pupils has created confidence and a real sense of purpose throughout the school and among parents.
- Information on pupils' progress is accurately captured and tracked. However, analysis by staff is not always robust enough to be sure that all pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching still further to accelerate pupils' progress in lessons and

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raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and English by:

- ensuring teachers provide challenging activities that are matched to the needs of all pupils and that promote active learning
  - asking more probing questions in lessons, which give pupils opportunities to develop their speaking skills and explain their ideas fully.
- Sharpen the impact of leaders and managers, including the governing body, in driving improvement by:
- ensuring new curriculum developments in teaching are judged against clear success criteria
  - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information on targets set is analysed robustly to evaluate success.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children start school mostly with skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in the areas of speaking and listening. As a result of good teaching children make good progress making most gains in their communication and reading skills. This was observed when children took part in a hunt for teddy bears. Using role-play and music to act out the story, the children thoroughly enjoyed practising their sounds and letters, and made good progress as a result of the teachers' skilful and encouraging questioning.

The quality of pupils' learning and progress in lessons is good. Pupils enjoy good relationships with staff and respond enthusiastically to tasks set by teachers. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and behave responsibly. For example, in a Year 2 numeracy lesson pupils thoroughly enjoyed working out different combinations of coins that would be needed to send varying sized parcels at the post office. As a result of matching activities closely to children's needs their knowledge of adding different coins to reach the same total was impressive as was their enthusiasm and excitement in their learning.

Attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. National test results suggested girls were doing better than boys in reading and writing and this gap has been closed by helping boys to practise their writing skills. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do as well as their peers, because staff make suitable adjustments to materials and activities so that they match pupils' needs. High levels of staffing enable children of varying abilities to make good progress, as a result of highly effective levels of care and one-to-one support they receive from teaching assistants.

Those pupils who are new to learning English make good progress as a result of staff providing practical activities using pictures and books to help to give clues for word recognition in role-play activities.

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By the end of Year 2 pupils make good progress in their reading and reach broadly average levels. This aspect of the school's work has become increasingly effective as a result of well-considered training programmes for teachers. The responses from parents and pupils to the inspection questionnaire confirm this, as one parent commented, 'My daughter used to find reading and writing difficult, but because the school acted swiftly and gave her the support she needed, she is now above average and has amazing confidence'.

### **Quality of teaching**

Classrooms are delightful, both indoors and out, with imaginative activities and attractive displays to capture and respond to children's interests and enthusiasm. For example, the sensory garden with its shrubs and toadstools and attractive seated area provides an area for quiet reflection and the study of various eco-systems. As a result of these and more rigorous monitoring and support, teaching is typically good, and sometimes outstanding.

Teaching is characterised by thorough planning, secure subject knowledge, high expectations and good use of assessment to support learning. For example, in Reception, teachers are perceptive and note down significant moments of each child's progress, including those helped by parents and carers, in order to plan 'next steps' in their learning. Similarly, in a lesson about the evacuation of all children to the country during the Second World War, Year 6 pupils began to role-play how it might feel to be child at this moment in history. After placing labels around their necks, they packed their suitcases and arrived at the train station. Through discussion they gained a real insight into the hearts and minds of the children's feelings at the time and as a result, their learning flourished. This curriculum project offered a variety of experiences that contributed well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and enabled them to deepen their knowledge of social history and culture.

Relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are extremely positive. Teachers' explanations are accurate and confident though occasionally can be overlong. Pupils who find learning difficult or whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are supported very well because staff focus sharply on their needs which supports them in their learning. This was observed in a Year 3 numeracy lesson where pupils acted as detectives in investigating a robbery at a well-known chocolate manufacturer. After examining CCTV footage, using analogue clocks most pupils were able to calculate the precise time of the robbery. Nevertheless, teachers do not always actively engage pupils in their learning or ask questions that challenge and help them to develop their speaking skills.

Parents and carers expressed views in the Ofsted questionnaire that teaching was good and had improved. Inspection finding confirm this to be the case.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

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Pupils enjoy coming to school, which they describe as happy and friendly. They feel safe and secure because of the good provision for their care. Parents and carers are appreciative of the school's warm and caring ethos. Typically, pupils' behaviour is good and fosters good attitudes to learning. This, together with their above average levels of attendance and improving basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology, shows that they are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Pupils develop a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. For instance, they have a keen awareness of the importance of e-safety when using the internet and have participated in safety awareness workshops run by 'Crucial Crew' which represent all emergency services. Pupils have a mature appreciation of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle by participating in sporting activities and by eating fresh fruit available in the classrooms. Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and that all problems are dealt with very well. They expressed an exceptionally high level of confidence in staff. Parents and carers also reported that they too were confident that the school's systems were sufficiently robust to deal with any incidents, should they occur.

### **Leadership and management**

The vision and clarity of purpose of the headteacher have created a welcoming and harmonious ethos which permeates the school. As a result of this high degree of care and trust, team work is a strength. There is clear ambition to make sure that all lessons are good or better and that pupils achieve well. Consequently, teaching is improving and accelerating progress and learning. Any weaknesses in teaching have been tackled and support given but there is still some inconsistency. Not all staff use sufficiently clear criteria in evaluating the impact of new curriculum developments in teaching on learning in order to judge its impact on pupils' achievement.

The curriculum meets the needs and interests of all pupils well. Pupils' improving basic skills and use of technology are complemented by a range of opportunities to develop their creativity. The curriculum is enriched by productions, guest speakers, themed events, and clubs ranging from the 'Wow' writing club to dance. These, together with the breakfast club, visits and trips provide good opportunities for pupils to broaden their social skills. Solid partnerships with local schools and outside agencies contribute effectively to pupils' good achievement.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted by the high expectations of all staff as role-models to the pupils. This enables pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to overcome their difficulties and make significant changes in their attitudes and in their lives at home. The school ensures that every pupil has an equal chance to learn and rigorously tackles any discrimination. Actions taken by leaders support different groups in making the progress of which they are capable so that equality of opportunity and inclusion are real. Members of the governing body are supportive of the school and fulfil their

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statutory duties. They are increasingly confident at challenging and holding the school to account with regard to pupils' academic performance.

The school has effective procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet government guidelines and include high quality checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing the safety of pupils. There is strong provision for pupils to prepare for life in the United Kingdom and a global society because leaders have an effective understanding of their own community and the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures within it. The school's international links are expanding and promote positive awareness of global issues, for example through fund-raising for 'Children in Need', and forming a partnership with a primary school in Nigeria for under-privileged children.

Since the previous inspection, the school has improved teaching, raised attendance and enhanced the provision in The Early Years Foundation Stage. These successful actions demonstrate that leaders have the capacity to make further improvements.



## 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



18 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery School, Stevenage, SG1 5JD**

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your school and taking the time to talk to the inspectors. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work and play. We were particularly impressed with your singing in assembly.

You go to a good school where your headteacher and teachers make it a very special and welcoming place. You and your parents and carers told us that you like school and that it is a very caring and happy place where you feel really safe. You are respectful, polite and considerate towards each other. Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you succeed, as are your parents and carers. Staff and governors know what they want to improve. So I have asked them to:

- make your lessons, particularly in literacy and numeracy, even more interesting by planning work that will challenge and engage you and by asking more searching questions, especially for those of you who find work easy
- check whether they think new approaches to their teaching have made a difference in order to help you achieve your very best
- look closely and regularly at the information about your performance so that they can help you to progress even faster, by seeing how well you are on track to meet your targets.

You too can all play your part in improving the school by asking for help when you are having difficulties with your learning. It was very good to meet you all. May I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott

Lead inspector

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