

Kingsway Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117168
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379363
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2012
Lead inspector	Norma Ball

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 of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Stephens
Headteacher	Mary Heard
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2009
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Norma Ball

Additional inspector

Natasha Campbell

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 12 lessons and a range of small teaching groups. A total of 11 teachers were seen and this included all class teachers. Inspectors made visits to classes to look at displays, to observe individual pupils and groups at work, and to listen to pupils read. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers. Meetings with the headteacher, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils also took place. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised samples of pupils' work, teachers' planning, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, and documentation relating to management, curriculum and safeguarding children. In addition, inspectors took account of responses to questionnaires from 69 parents and carers, 22 staff and 96 pupils.

Information about the school

Kingsway is smaller than the average-sized junior school. Over four fifths of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and others are from a variety of other heritages. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is below the national average, as is the proportion of these pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that found nationally. An above average proportion of pupils have a disability or special educational needs, of which most have moderate learning difficulties. The school has met the government floor targets for academic performance. The number of pupils attending the school has decreased over the past three years and almost two thirds of the teaching staff are new. The school has achieved National Healthy School status and Active Mark.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key findings

In accordance with Section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to leadership and management.

- The school’s overall effectiveness is inadequate because subject leaders and governors do not have the necessary skills to accelerate the pace of school improvement. Nevertheless the school is providing an acceptable standard of education for pupils because the quality of teaching is satisfactory and so is pupils’ achievement.
- Pupils’ attainment has been average for the past three years and there are clear signs that that progress is improving for almost all pupils. A large majority are back on course to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2.
- Teaching has improved after an extended period of staff changes, during which pupils’ learning and progress were, at times, inadequate. Teachers set targets for pupils in literacy and numeracy but these do not always identify sharply what pupils need to do to improve or the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils’ progress is tracked carefully through the school. However, at class level, assessment information is not used effectively to match tasks to pupils’ abilities. In particular, tasks do not always challenge pupils of higher ability.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and often good in lessons. Pupils are generally enthusiastic and apply themselves satisfactorily to their learning.
- Pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory and there are strengths in the school’s promotion of moral and social development.
- Staff are united and share the ambition of the headteacher and deputy headteacher to improve all areas of the school’s work, especially pupils’

achievement. The pace of improvement remains slow because subject leaders and members of the governing body do not have the necessary skills to monitor and evaluate the school's work effectively or to challenge and support where improvement is needed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of subject leaders further so they play a more active part in monitoring the quality of teaching and give teachers clear guidance on how to improve pupils' progress
 - extending the monitoring role of the governing body to all areas of the school's work and so increase the level of challenge they offer to school leaders and managers.

- In order to accelerate pupils' progress, improve the quality of teaching so that at least 80% is good or better by the end of this academic year by:
 - making consistent use of assessment information to match work to pupils' ability, especially improving challenge for the more able
 - ensuring pupils know and use their personal targets to improve their work and identify what they need to learn next
 - ensuring introductions to lessons are efficient and pupils begin their learning activities promptly
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory. They enter the school with average attainment and make satisfactory progress to attain broadly average standards at the end of Year 6. Attainment has not risen above average because pockets of inadequate teaching and staff turbulence have, in recent years, inhibited the progress pupils make. In particular boys' progress in literacy has not been as good as that of girls. This gap is closing as a result of improved consistency in teaching and also the careful selection of strategies to improve pupils' writing skills. Similarly, pupils with disabilities or special educational needs have not always attained as well as similar pupils nationally. Their attainment is now improving because their needs are quickly assessed and the support they receive is flexible and well planned.

Pupils show good attitudes to learning and this contributes to their improved progress in many lessons. They settle to their tasks quickly and work with enthusiasm, especially where lessons are well-paced and capture their interest. They enjoy sharing their ideas, especially with their 'talk partners'.

In mathematics, a careful focus on problem solving is helping to strengthen pupils' use of numbers. The initiative has been led carefully by the deputy headteacher and is well integrated in all classes. In English there are early signs of improvement in the

progress that pupils are making but improvement has been slower because subject leadership has been slow to have effect. However, a drive to improve grammar and vocabulary, especially through creative writing on enjoyable topics, is now being integrated through the school. Pupils' reading skills have improved and are now average because they are regularly monitored and assessed by teachers in all classes.

Pupils' progress is tracked accurately. In Year 6, ability sets across the year group in English and mathematics are having a positive impact on progress because pupils work confidently and are challenged effectively in groups of similar ability. However, in whole-class teaching, assessment information is not always used successfully to plan tasks that challenge pupils, and especially the more able, and this occasionally limits the progress they make.

Approximately one fifth of the parents and carers who expressed a view are concerned about the progress their children make. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' progress is improving and that underachievement has almost been eliminated, but parents and carers' concerns are, in a few instances, justified.

Quality of teaching

Pupils are confident about the teaching but a small minority of parents and carers have concerns. The quality of teaching is improving. Recent appointments have strengthened the staff team. The close and regular monitoring of lessons by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has resulted in improved consistency in key areas of teaching and learning, such as the structure of lessons and the use of different learning objectives for pupils with different needs. Consequently, inadequate teaching has been eliminated and the quality of teaching, seen in the inspection, confirmed by the school's own monitoring, is satisfactory overall, with some that is good.

One pupil, typical of many, said, 'I love my school a lot because the teachers help us enjoy learning and make it fun'. Teachers explain the purpose of lessons clearly, but these introductions can often be too lengthy and so limit the time available for pupils to work on tasks independently. The pace of lessons is mostly good, and interesting tasks based upon good subject knowledge help to sustain pupils' interest.

In the best lessons, tasks are well structured to match pupils' abilities and provide them with appropriate challenge. In a Year 4 literacy lesson, for example, pupils were excited about their creative writing tasks. They considered stories from Ghana and Norway, helping to extend their cultural awareness, and had a good range of stimulating photographs to think about before they began writing. Expectations were clear and tailored to provide good challenge for the different ability groups in the class.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly with development points identified for some pieces of work. The use of individual targets in English and mathematics has been recently revised and is not yet fully embedded in the school. Targets do not always make clear what pupils still need to learn and teachers do not make them a regular focus in lessons or ensure that pupils conscientiously follow the advice that they

receive.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is satisfactory and in lessons is often good because pupils are interested in their work. School data and the comments of pupils indicate that there has been a significant improvement in behaviour. This is the result of a revised behaviour policy, which is applied consistently throughout the school. Pupils value the team-point rewards that they can gain for good and helpful behaviour. If they do transgress, pupils are helped to understand that what they do can affect others and how they can improve. A few pupils sometimes present challenging behaviour. Pupils say that teachers deal with any incidents of unacceptable or inattentive behaviour quickly and fairly. Pupils display good levels of moral and social development. As a result, playtimes are happy, lively and sociable occasions. Pupils are well-supervised. Play leaders are valued by their peers, and pupils regularly talk to special peer mediators if they have concerns. Inspectors consulted a number of pupils about behaviour and bullying because there were several negative responses to this section of the pupils' and also the parents' and carers' questionnaires. Pupils were adamant that behaviour had improved with the new behaviour policy, and that they enjoyed school. They said that they were not affected by bullying and that they felt safe and well cared for. Rates of attendance are above average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher works in close partnership with the deputy headteacher and together they maintain a determined approach to driving the school forward. However, their energies have been dissipated by frequent staff changes, which have led to improvement initiatives faltering or being diverted off course. There is now a positive ethos amongst staff and a united ambition to improve the school. Development points from the previous inspection, within the constraints imposed by frequent staff changes, have been addressed satisfactorily, although some elements remain as work in progress. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and identifies sharply the priorities for improvement. There are now clear signs of actions having an impact on driving the school forward. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have demonstrated the capacity to improve the school further but the weaknesses elsewhere make it inadequate overall.

Subject leaders, following the example of the deputy headteacher's leadership of mathematics, are taking active steps to improve their leadership skills. Learning walks, scrutiny of lesson planning and sampling of pupils' work are taking place. However, the school's middle leaders do not yet have the necessary insights into what is working well and what needs to be improved to offer constructive advice and criticism to their colleagues. Similarly, not all leaders have the necessary expertise to ensure that the work across the curriculum is planned, marked and evaluated with sufficient precision to strengthen pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This limits the impact of the school's drive to raise overall achievement. Support from local authority advisers and the very recent support from the local National Support School partner have been used to good effect in adding to the impetus of school improvement.

Until very recently, the governing body has been too reliant on the headteacher for

information about key areas of the school's performance. The work of the new Chair of the Governing Body and an improved committee structure are leading to a more informed and challenging approach. Nevertheless, members of the governing body do not do enough independent monitoring to give them authority either in supporting and challenging the school's leaders, or in developing a strongly strategic role in relation to school improvement. The governing body has been diligent in establishing comprehensive arrangements to safeguard children and ensure their health and safety. Regular reviews of safety are carried out and all policies are securely integrated throughout the school. Equality of opportunity is promoted satisfactorily for all groups of pupils, including those with disabilities or special educational needs. All pupils are known and valued as individuals.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a satisfactory range of experiences for pupils of all abilities. Pupils confirm that the school offers them many interesting activities, and they speak with enthusiasm about the clubs, out of school visits and visitors, who add to their enjoyment of learning. However, opportunities are missed to consolidate and extend pupils' writing and mathematical skills across all subjects. The curriculum makes a sound contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, alongside the development of their academic skills.

Parents and carers are concerned about many aspects of the school's work, and some of their concerns are justified. However, there are clear signs of improvement in the progress their children are now making and the standards of behaviour in the school, two areas which were of most concern to them. Parents and carers are pleased that their children are safe in school and feel they are being helped to develop their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills. The school works with zeal to involve parents and carers with their children's learning through regular workshops, termly mini reports linked to consultation evenings, and an annual report.

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).

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.

6 February 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Kingsway Junior School, Watford, WD25 0JH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing how you work in lessons, and sharing in your assembly and playtime. We were also able to talk to some of you to hear your views of your school.

As a result of our inspection, we have judged that your school is providing you with an adequate education but, nevertheless, needs to improve at a faster rate. We have therefore given your school a notice to improve. This means that, although there are some things about your school which are satisfactory, some aspects of leadership and management are not strong enough to bring about the improvement that is still needed. We have talked about this with the headteacher and the governing body and we have asked them to do three things to make your school better.

- In order to help you make better progress, we have asked your teachers to use what they know about how well you are doing to plan work for you that is really challenging, especially for those of you who find learning easier. We would also like them to give you more opportunities to use your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- We have asked the school's leaders to make sure that teaching is good. We have asked your teachers to make the literacy and numeracy targets much clearer so you keep moving forward with your learning and know what you need to learn next. So that you have plenty of time to practise all of this in your own work, we have asked that the introductions to your lessons are shorter.
- Finally, we have asked the teachers who lead your subjects to keep a very close watch on all that is happening, so that they can help improve your the progress you are making. Members of the governing body will also be checking on all that the school does, especially on how well you are learning, so they can plan ahead and make sure your school improves at an even faster rate.

You can help to make your school even better by working hard and doing your best to follow the advice your teachers give. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball
Lead inspector

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