

# Field Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	117160
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379359
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Karim Murcia
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Henley-Washford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Watford Field Road Watford WD18 0AZ
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<b>Age group</b>	7–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	1–2 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	379359



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Selwyn Ward

Additional inspector

Shân Oswald

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 25 lessons taught by 10 teachers, with a particular focus on writing. Inspectors listened to pupils read, and spoke with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, school development planning, school self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching and the questionnaire responses of 166 pupils, 12 staff and 71 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

This school is smaller than average. Pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds; around a third are White British and a third are of Pakistani heritage. More than half of the pupils are identified as speaking English as an additional language, although only a small number are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average, as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. In most year groups, there are more girls than boys. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which specifies the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and/or progress. At the time of the inspection, two members of the senior leadership team had been on extended leave of absence. Field Junior has Activemark, Artsmark Silver and Eco Schools Silver awards, as well as Healthy Schools status.

The Little Fielders playgroup uses a room in the school building. This provision is independent of the school and is separately inspected.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- Field Junior provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils are confident and keen to learn but the school is satisfactory rather than good because leadership and management are not ensuring that teaching and the progress pupils make are better than satisfactory.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment is average, and pupils from all backgrounds make satisfactory progress in lessons and over their time at the school. Pupils are not all confident enough in reading unfamiliar words when their reading skills do not build on what they learn in their infant school.
- Teachers are successful in motivating pupils and making learning interesting and fun, but they do not always challenge pupils enough. When pupils of different abilities are given similar work to do, it is sometimes too easy for those who are more able.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. An important strength of this school is that pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They listen well in most lessons and settle to work quickly and without fuss. Relationships throughout the school are good. As a result, pupils learn to treat each other with respect and the school functions as a friendly, harmonious community.
- Leaders have created a positive climate for learning where pupils are happy and secure, but management systems are not all rigorous enough in checking on the effectiveness of teaching, setting measurable targets for gauging improvement and ensuring that whole-school policies are consistently followed.
- Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- By the end of the autumn term 2012, accelerate pupils' progress in lessons, and

particularly that of more-able pupils, by ensuring that:

- the learning objectives set out at the start of lessons are sharply focused and include success criteria that ensure that pupils of all abilities build on what they have learnt before
  - work is always matched to pupils' different capabilities
  - reading skills are accurately assessed and build systematically on pupils' experience in Key Stage 1
  - lengthy periods of passive listening do not limit the opportunities for pupils to get on with writing and practical activities
  - teaching assistants always have an active role during whole-class teaching
  - in all subjects, pupils have consistently clear guidance through marking that shows them the next steps they need to take to improve their learning
  - all pupils know, understand and refer to their targets.
- Develop more robust management systems by the end of the summer term 2012 through:
- focusing leaders' lesson observations on pupils' learning and rates of progress
  - rigorously following up the points for development identified by school leaders when they visit lessons and scrutinise performance data and pupils' work
  - ensuring that the school development plan sets out specific action to achieve the school's priorities and incorporates measurable targets against which the governing body can gauge the impact of actions taken
  - making sure that school policies and procedures are consistently followed, particularly for chasing up absence.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils join this school, mostly from the neighbouring infant school, with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics that is average. Test results at the end of Year 6 have similarly mostly been average. The exception was English in 2011, which was the equivalent of around six months behind the national average. This dip in outcomes was due to results in reading that were lower than teachers had expected from their assessments. Although the government floor standard for attainment was met, the proportion of pupils making the progress expected over Key Stage 2 was below the progress target. Few boys attained the higher Level 5 in English.

Pupils' current work indicates an improvement on 2011, and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics that is once again in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement, including for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language. Progress in lessons is no better than satisfactory, particularly when pupils are given similar work to do regardless of their different abilities. In Year 6, for example, able pupils showed at the start of a lesson on persuasive writing that they knew a great deal

about the rhetorical and other literary devices for conveying an argument. Though they enjoyed the lesson, alongside the rest of the class, picking these features out from printed texts, there was, for them, little new learning. Younger pupils sometimes lack strategies for tackling unfamiliar words when they encounter them in their reading. This is because the curriculum does not ensure full continuity of reading skills and techniques that build systematically on what pupils learn in Key Stage 1. Parents and carers are aware of these weaknesses. As a parent of a Year 3 child explained, 'The reading books my child was given were below the level they were reading in the infant school.'

### **Quality of teaching**

Relationships throughout the school are good, so that pupils are well motivated and try their best because they are eager to please their teachers. Pupils are also enthused by the topics they cover that link subjects across the curriculum and which contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents and carers express positive views on the quality of teaching, as do the pupils, but some wrote to indicate what they describe as 'a tendency not to push children'. Inspectors found that the learning of more-able pupils, in particular, slowed whenever pupils of all abilities were given the same or similar work to do. Though pupils are often given 'success criteria' to help them measure how well they are learning, these are generally the same for all pupils. This means they are not always sufficiently challenging. Teachers set out 'learning objectives' at the start of lessons but these sometimes focus on the task to be carried out rather than what it is that the pupils are expected to learn. Sometimes the 'learning objectives' are far too generalised, such as 'to use punctuation correctly'.

Teaching assistants often provide well-focused support, especially to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, when pupils are working independently or in small groups. They are not deployed as effectively during periods of whole-class teaching, and on some occasions they are largely just passive observers. Lesson introductions sometimes go on for too long, reducing opportunities for pupils to get on with practical activities and writing. This contrasts with the many sessions where teachers vary activities to ensure lessons are lively and move forward at a brisk pace.

Marking varies in quality. Much of the marking, particularly of writing in English, is of a high standard, clearly identifying for pupils the next steps in their learning. This is not a consistent feature, however. Marking in some other subjects is more cursory, with errors missed, including of key spellings and punctuation. Although pupils all have individual targets, not all know what their targets are or what they need to do to achieve them.

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

Behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around the school. The great majority of parents and carers confirm this, as do the pupils. They confirm that incidents of bullying of any kind are rare and that these are readily resolved if they do arise. As one parent explained, 'My child was bullied by others, but the school dealt with it straightaway.' Among the many partnerships developed by school leaders is a tie with nearby Watford Football Club which pupils attend to learn action to 'kick out

racism in football'. Pupils feel safe at school, and the parents and carers who returned questionnaires were unanimous in their view that the school keeps their children safe.

Pupils' good behaviour is not merely reflected in their good conduct but also in the positive attitudes to learning. Pupils listen well in lessons and most are keen to volunteer answers to teachers' questions. They work well together when organised into small groups, although there can sometimes be a less active member when groups of four or five are arranged.

Attendance is average but rates of persistent absence are high when compared with other schools. This is due in part to extended holidays in home countries of pupils from overseas. Systems for chasing up absences are not as formalised and consistent as envisaged in the school's attendance policy. That specifies, for example, a phone call to parents and carers on the first day of any unexplained absence, but this procedure is not always followed.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and leadership team carry out regular monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work. They identify individual whole-school points for improvement but these are not followed up with sufficient rigour. As a result, the pace of improvement is slow, with lessons seen during the inspection still showing similar points for development as those previously identified by school leaders. Leaders' lesson observations give them an overly positive view of the quality of teaching because they focus on the features of teaching rather than on pupils' progress and learning. Reflecting this, some inspection grades are lower than those in the last inspection report. Nevertheless, the school can point to some successes. The building of partnerships with local secondary schools has helped to extend curricular opportunities for pupils. Leaders have also created a positive climate for learning, much appreciated by parents and carers, where pupils from diverse backgrounds get on well together, behave well and are keen to learn. Several parents and carers remarked positively on this. As one wrote, 'My son has become more confident since being at the juniors.' These key successes show that Field Junior has the capacity to improve.

There is wide-ranging extra-curricular provision, and the curriculum includes the opportunity for every pupil in Year 3 to learn to play a stringed instrument. The school's various awards confirm the breadth of the curriculum. The school benefits from extensive facilities, enhanced through its acquisition of the neighbouring redundant church, which provides a fabulous indoor space for performing arts activities. This provision, and the use made of the spacious separate facilities for art, design technology and music, makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum includes regular opportunities to learn and practise written as well as spoken French, and pupils are excited that they will be able this term to learn some basic Mandarin. Pupils are also enthusiastic about the history and geography topics that they learn about, although an over-reliance on worksheets in some classes limits the opportunity for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in these other subjects. It is this, and the need for Year 3 reading to better build on provision in the infant school, that make the curriculum

satisfactory rather than good.

The school's development plan offers a comprehensive overview but it does not set out clear enough actions and it incorporates few measurable targets. This greatly limits its effectiveness as a management tool for use by the governing body in driving school improvement. Nevertheless, the governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet regulatory requirements. Discrimination is tackled and equal opportunities are promoted appropriately, although there remains a gender gap between the performance of boys and girls in some year groups. There is little difference between the performance of White British and Pakistani heritage pupils.



## 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.**



5 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Field Junior School, Watford, WD18 0AZ**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school, and for telling us your views in person and through your questionnaires. Field Junior is providing you with a satisfactory education so that you mostly go on to secondary school having reached the nationally expected standards in English and mathematics. We would like to see you do better than this, so we have suggested some ways in which teachers could help you make faster progress in lessons. Some of you told us that the work you were doing was too easy. We agree. You can help to do better by telling your teacher when you think you can cope with harder work. You can also help by taking care to read the comments teachers write when they mark your work and by making sure that you know and refer to your individual targets when you are working.

The headteacher, leadership team and governing body check on how well you are doing but we have suggested some ways in which management arrangements in the school could be sharpened. For example, just as you usually have success criteria in lessons, we have asked that the governing body sets clear, measurable success criteria in its development plan.

A strength of your school is its good provision for your personal development, helping you to become confident young people. We were especially pleased to see how well behaved you are and that you are attentive in lessons. Although you come from many different backgrounds, you all get on well together and that helps to make your school a happy, friendly, safe place to be.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful on our visit, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward  
Lead inspector

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