

Markyate Village School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117127
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358088
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Rangel and Tamzin Evers
Headteacher	Jon Hood
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed all the staff teaching and saw 14 lessons. They met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, representatives from the governing body and the school council and a group of Year 6 pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation and policies including the school improvement plan. They scrutinised the questionnaire responses from 78 parents and carers and 98 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How effectively does the school evaluate assessment and progress data to identify priorities for school and class development?
- Has teaching improved since the last inspection, particularly so that it meets the needs of pupils, including the challenge for higher attaining pupils?

Information about the school

The school is a little smaller than the average primary school. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds but the large majority of pupils are of a White British heritage. There are a small number of pupils who are learning English as an additional language but none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that seen in most schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low and the percentage with statements detailing their educational needs is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a part-time nursery (mornings) and a Reception class. This takes in new children in September and January. As part of its extended school provision, the school operates a breakfast club, a lunchtime club for nursery pupils and an after school club for two evenings per week. The school has gained Healthy School Award, Activemark and the International Award (Foundation Level).

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

This is a good school. There has been good improvement since it was last inspected. That report noted that the headteacher was leading the school on a 'journey of improvement'. These improvements have now become more established, creating the conditions for good learning. Because teaching has improved since the last inspection and the learning in most lessons is good, pupils make good progress across the school. They achieve well and enjoy school, reflected in their above average attendance. The improved progress also means that attainment has also improved. Pupils are proud of their school.

Pupils report feeling safe in school. It is a friendly place and pupils are confident that staff will handle any issues that they might have. Behaviour is good and because they have developed good attitudes to learning and want to do well, pupils work hard in their lessons. They respond well to the stimulating and wide-ranging opportunities provided within the curriculum. Pupils have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle, for example the importance of a balanced diet and exercise, and many pupils participate enthusiastically in the range of sporting activities provided within the school. Pupils take their various roles and responsibilities seriously. The school council is effective because council members are very aware of their representative role and ensure that they make things happen for the benefit of the school community.

Teaching is good in most lessons. Occasionally it is outstanding. When this occurs there is a strong sense of teachers working with the pupils in partnership, tapping into and fostering their creativity and the quality of their thinking. By providing opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility for aspects of their learning in the outstanding lessons pupils develop their independent skills particularly well.

The senior leadership team work well together. The periodic meetings with class teachers focused on pupils' progress have been a key ingredient in ensuring improvements and more even progress across the school. These meetings are based on careful evaluation of school data. Targets are appropriately challenging. Given the effectiveness of the changes since the last inspection the school's leadership has good capacity for sustaining improvement. There is a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved although judgements in the school's self-evaluation are often cautious. The school improvement plan accurately identifies key priorities for the school. Its effectiveness as a tool for improvement is limited by the fact that it does not identify with precision and, where appropriate quantify, the objectives for the identified priorities. This makes it more difficult to monitor the initiative's effectiveness.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by embedding the partnership with pupils and the opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their initiative, creativity and independent thinking.
- Ensure that the school's improvement plan is enhanced as a tool to drive school improvement by making objectives precise and where appropriate measurable so that they provide an explicit framework for accurate evaluation.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, so that they are keen and want to do well. They concentrate in lessons, listen attentively and work at a good rate. During the 'Big Write' session, pupils' concentration in classes was almost palpable, as they drew together in their creative writing the various threads of their earlier discussions and the teacher's emphasis, for example, of using a rich vocabulary. Pupils work well together and in groups. Often, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work - 'it could be even better if...' - which fosters their independent learning skills as well as spurring them on.

Attainment has improved over the last three years, especially in reading, mathematics and in speaking and listening. The school is focusing on improving pupils' writing and pupils are currently making good progress. The progress of high attaining pupils is good because the teaching provides them with suitable levels of challenge. As learning and teaching have improved, a more even pattern of progress has been established across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because they have clear targets and the very positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and pupils help raise their self-confidence. Within class there is no difference in the performance or attitudes of boys and girls.

Pupils develop many personal qualities which contribute well to their future economic well-being. The school fosters pupils' self-confidence well because it recognises a broad range of achievement, providing pupils with a wide range of opportunities to succeed. Pupils understand the school's golden rules and the school's values, for example, respect for others and this is reflected in the inclusive and cohesive nature of the school community. There are good opportunities to develop a range of social skills. Pupils' cultural development, in particular their awareness of the diverse nature of society, although satisfactory is the weaker element.

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

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	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Learning in most lessons is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers plan well for the wide range of needs in their class. There is good teamwork with teaching assistants who provide effective support to individual or groups of pupils. Relationships with pupils are good, creating a warm, positive encouraging ethos so that pupils are confident to give extended answers. In outstanding lessons and those good lessons with excellent features, tasks are open-ended and provide an opportunity for pupils to demonstrate their initiative and independent thinking and develop their capacity as learners.

Assessment is used well. Teachers have a good understanding of what level pupils are working at and the next steps in their learning because they use specialised assessment materials. Marking is detailed, giving points for improvement. The school tracks the progress of all pupils carefully, evaluating and reviewing this periodically with teachers in progress meetings. This means that the school is able to identify early those pupils who require additional help or challenge or to put in place alternative approaches.

Pupils enjoy learning because they participate in a wide range of stimulating, often memorable activities. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Subjects are linked together in a meaningful way to provide interesting contexts for their writing. The curriculum, through the work on social and emotional aspects of learning and the personal social and healthy education work, makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, as well as their academic learning. There is a good range of extra-curricular and

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enrichment activities and good links established with schools overseas as part of the school's international work.

There are many instances where targeted support of individuals and their parents or carers has been particularly effective in removing barriers to learning and leading to improvement in behaviour, confidence and achievement. Specific groups are identified effectively, supported and catered for well with the support from outside specialist agencies. Pupils are known and valued as individuals. The drop-in breakfast club run by canteen staff provides a safe and secure environment; pupils were relaxed and happily engaged in a drawing activity and chatting to each other.

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?

There is a strong sense of teamwork, commitment to the pupils and to school improvement. Members of staff think carefully about planning and managing pupils' learning and are developing their confidence in adopting creative approaches. There is good leadership support for developing teaching and the quality of learning. The progress of all pupils is tracked and evaluated carefully to ensure that the performance of individuals and specific groups are not slipping. The school takes effective action to tackle aspects of underperformance such as pupils' writing. Safeguarding is satisfactory.

The governing body provides good strategic leadership, for example in establishing the senior leadership team. It provides effective support and challenge. It has established the parent council to sound out parents' views. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities. The school knows its local community well and established good links within it. The school has established links with schools overseas which give aspects of the curriculum an international perspective. The school is a cohesive community but pupils' direct experience of other communities outside the immediate area is limited.

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

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join the part-time Nursery with skills which are typical for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and in the Reception class. Children develop good attitudes to learning, independence, good behaviour and a good foundation for their academic skills. They concentrate well, listen attentively and play well together.

Teaching is good. Teacher-led sessions are balanced by other opportunities for children to initiate their activities and make choices about their learning. Good relationships among children and adults create a secure, warm ethos which ensures children grow in confidence. Adults are skilled at exploiting the learning opportunities through questioning and discussions with the children. Careful assessment informs the team's planning for children's next steps. This is reflected in the children's individual learning journey diaries which identify significant steps in a child's learning.

There are good relations with parents and carers and good attention to children's welfare needs. The indoor environment is stimulating; the outdoor environment less so. Staff do however ensure that the full range of learning experiences is provided outside. Leadership and management are good, with time carefully managed so that the leader is able to keep an overview of the children's work with other staff. Planning is detailed so that all staff know their roles; transitions from one activity to another are seamless.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school and its work. About a quarter of parents and carers added comments to their responses. These were mainly positive and included comments such as: 'a caring and enthusiastic school'; the 'school works hard to do its best for its pupils'; 'the headteacher is approachable and effective'; pupils 'respect and support each other'; there is a 'friendly community spirit' and staff 'work hard to make my child's experience positive and supportive'. There were concerns expressed about the communication with parents, although one parent noted that this had improved since the introduction of the texting service. There were also concerns about the school's management of inappropriate behaviour. During the inspection staff manage behaviour in a positive manner, encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their actions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Markyate Village School and Nursery 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 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 195 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	62	27	35	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	59	30	38	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	44	41	53	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	51	33	42	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	34	44	41	53	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	47	37	47	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	55	29	37	1	1	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)	26	33	35	45	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	44	38	49	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	26	41	53	7	9	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	33	45	58	5	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	35	44	56	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	53	33	42	3	4	0	0

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



8 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Markyate Village School and Nursery, St Albans, AL3 8PT

Thank you for making me and my colleagues so welcome in your school. I would like to thank those Year 6 pupils and the representatives from the school council who gave up part of their lunchtime to talk to us. What you had to say was very helpful.

I would like to share with you our main findings from our inspection visit. This is a good school. Standards by the end of Year 6 are similar to what you see in many schools but are improving because you are making good progress in most lessons and achieve well. Occasionally in lessons you make outstanding progress. I have asked the headteacher to work with staff to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons by making sure that teachers provide you with more opportunities to use your creativity and encourage your independent thinking so that you to take even more responsibility for your learning. You told us you enjoy school and this is reflected in your good attendance. We agree with you that you do many interesting things which make lessons fun. Staff care about you a great deal and keep a careful eye on your progress. They use this information well to identify how they can support and challenge you further. The school is helping you develop as young people well. Your behaviour is good. You told us you feel safe and the school is a friendly community. You take your various responsibilities very seriously and the school council is effective.

The school's leadership is good. They draw up a plan of improvements for the school. I also asked the headteacher to make sure that all staff are very clear about how they will judge the success of these improvements. This will help them monitor the progress of their work. It also means that they can all give themselves a pat on the back when they have achieved their target!

The school has come a long way since it was last inspected. You can all help it continue to grow and develop, particularly if you continue to enjoy learning, work hard and continue to take advantage of what the school provides.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector

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