

# **Higham Ferrers Junior School**

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 121828

**Local Authority** Northamptonshire

Inspection number 359092

Inspection dates20-21 October 2010Reporting inspectorCarol Worthington

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 324

**Appropriate authority** The governing body

ChairGeoff MooreHeadteacherAndrew BrownDate of previous school inspection27 November 2007

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### Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 16

- lessons; all 12 class teachers were seen. Meetings were held with the
- headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the vice-chair of the governing
- body and two groups of pupils. Many pupils were spoken to informally. Inspectors
- observed the school's work, and looked at records of assessments of pupils'
- attainment, the tracking of their progress and samples of their work in books. All
- safeguarding documents were scrutinised. Inspectors analysed 89 parents' and
- carers' questionnaire returns, together with those completed by 14 staff and 272 Key Stage 2 pupils.

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

- Has the decline in attainment over the last three years now been halted and are there clear signs of improved attainment and progress throughout the school?
- Does the quality of teaching and learning now have enough good features to result in all pupils making good enough progress throughout the school?
- How accurate are the assessments identifying pupils who have special educational needs relating to learning difficulties, and how is their progress being judged?
- How does the school extend community cohesion beyond its immediate locality and prepare pupils for life in multicultural Britain?

# Information about the school

This above average-sized junior school is in an urban setting. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin, with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. All speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with minor degrees of special educational needs is much higher than in most schools, but there is currently none with statements of special educational needs. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has Healthy School status.

Since its previous inspection, there have been significant changes of leadership and teaching staff. The current headteacher was previously the deputy headteacher. The school is currently taking part in a local authority Improving Schools Programme.

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

# **Inspection judgements**

### Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

### The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

# **Main 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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvements in the school.

Since the previous inspection, academic standards shown by performance in national tests have fallen sharply and have been well below average since 2008. The latest tests in 2010 show a small degree of improvement, but are not nearly high enough to show adequate progress from pupils' starting points. There are clear signs of improved attainment in some classes in all years. However, this is still too low for current pupils and is not showing the rapid and sustained improvement needed to bring standards back to the level observed at the previous inspection.

Progress is inadequate in English and mathematics because of inconsistencies in teaching and use of assessment, so the overall quality of learning and achievement is inadequate. Pupils make good progress in some lessons, where teaching is based on high expectations for all abilities and they can see for themselves the progress they are making. As a result, pupils are well motivated, enjoy their learning and their behaviour is often exemplary. They make far less progress when the pace is slow, teachers talk too much and do not involve pupils enough in their own learning. On very isolated occasions, the noise level rises to such a pitch that some pupils find it difficult to hear the teacher and completely lose concentration. Pupils do not enjoy learning in these lessons.

New systems to track pupils' progress have been introduced by school leaders and have been successful in identifying some areas as a focus for improving attainment, particularly writing. However, the systems are too complicated and do not show clearly the progress of every pupil in the school from entry in Year 3 to exit in Year 6. There are some doubts about their accuracy and validity, especially for the large proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There are some areas in which the school does well. Attendance is above average. Pastoral care features strongly in the support of pupils and families who find circumstances have made them vulnerable. The majority of pupils feel safe and know they can approach adults or peer mentors if they are worried. They have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy and fit. Older pupils run the healthy tuck shop. All pupils do a lot of physical activity and sports clubs are very popular. They make a good contribution to their school community through the school council. Older pupils are also responsible 'buddies' to younger ones and this makes the transition from infant to junior school easier. There are good pastoral features of the transition to secondary school, but their academic standards means that they are not as well prepared as they could be.

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

School leaders have not been successful in driving improvement rapidly enough because the high expectations necessary for success are not sufficiently communicated and understood throughout the school. The good practice present in the school is not sufficiently well shared. Support from the local authority has enabled appropriate priorities for improvement to be set, but effective distribution of leadership is in its infancy and not yet showing impact. Furthermore, the governing body does not hold the school sufficiently to account. This together with inadequate leadership and management and the insufficient progress made since the time of the last inspection, highlight that the school does not have the capacity for sustained improvement.

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

- Improve attainment and progress in English and mathematics, by:
  - simplifying and making sure that processes for assessing the progress of pupils are accurate, valid, regularly completed, and enable the progress of individual pupils from Years 3 to 6 to be shown easily; using this information to identify and remedy underachievement
  - developing teachers' expertise in mathematics
  - ensuring pupils take pride in presenting written work to a high standard, are productive throughout all lessons and improve basic numeracy by learning their times tables up to 12 by the end of Year 4.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - developing teachers' expertise in information and communication technology (ICT) and its use as a tool to motivate and help pupils assess their own learning
  - making sure that pupils fully understand what they are required to learn in lessons, are given more independent, challenging work and their learning is checked by the end of the lesson
  - ensuring that marking and target setting are used effectively to enable pupils to understand fully what they need to do to attain higher standards
  - sharing the good practice already present in the school to help eliminate the current inconsistency.
- Improve the impact that leadership and management has on the quality of education provided by:
  - rigorously monitoring the learning of pupils of all abilities in the classroom and making sure that teaching is fully meeting their needs
  - consistently demonstrating and promoting high standards in all aspects of provision, and expecting equally high standards in all outcomes for all pupils in all classes
  - developing the roles of the newly appointed literacy and numeracy co-ordinators
  - improving the role of the governing body in holding the school to account for its standards.

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

# Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Pupils enter the school with at least average, and often above average, attainment. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make inadequate progress from Year 3 to Year 6. Current attainment remains well below average because there is such inconsistency in teaching and use of assessment in the school. In some classes, pupils are extremely well motivated and make good progress. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed acting 'venomously' when performing Halloween 'magic box' poems. A repeating film clip of 'rocks and soils' day, accompanied by calming music, helped Year 3 pupils to concentrate in silence and complete a well-presented piece of extended writing, recognising when they and classmates had reached targets set for the lesson. Well-presented writing is not universal in the school. In good lessons, pupils with special educational needs make good progress with challenging work set by teachers who have high expectations of their capabilities.

In other lessons, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make too little progress because there is no focus and too much teacher talk for almost half the lesson, and the group activities that follow are lacking in enjoyment and challenge, so that pupils finish early and spend a lot of time chatting in groups. Pupils do not regularly have the opportunity to check their learning at the end of lessons. In an inadequate mathematics lesson, higher-ability pupils faced so little challenge in the work they were doing that the noise levels rose so high that some pupils could not hear the teacher. In another, such low numeracy skills were observed that Year 6 pupils needed calculators to add a series of up to ten numbers from 1 to 20. Information and communication technology skills are low because the school does not have enough computers to allow pupils to have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills, either in ICT lessons, or through spontaneous use as a learning tool in other subjects. Pupils' practical skills, however, as demonstrated by examples of art and design technology, are above the nationally expected levels for their age.

Some aspects of personal development are good. Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They care for each other through the buddy system and use of the friendship bench at playtimes. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, through lessons in religious education, personal, social and health education and daily assemblies or reflection time. Pupils' knowledge of the wide variety of cultures in modern Britain is limited by a lack of opportunity for first hand multicultural experiences in their immediate location, but they gain a satisfactory knowledge about the wide variety of cultures in modern Britain through religious education, visits and visitors.

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	4	
Taking into account:		
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	-	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3	
Pupils' behaviour		
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles		
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community		
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to		
their future economic well-being	4	
Taking into account:	2	
Pupils' attendance 1	2	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 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?

Teaching and learning are inadequate, because they are ineffective in promoting the rapid improvement in progress necessary to raise attainment. Examples of good teaching are present in all years, but not consistently enough to make a significant difference throughout the school. In a lower mathematics set, for example, pupils were constantly challenged by harder work which was frequently checked, so that the pace of learning was rapid and progress good. In inadequate lessons, too much teacher talk followed by too simple worksheets provide little challenge for all abilities.

The teaching of English is, on the whole, better than that of mathematics. Some teachers have weak expertise in mathematics which prevents them from offering adequate challenge to their pupils, particularly those of higher ability. Many teachers do not have sufficient expertise in ICT to use their interactive whiteboards confidently, thus losing an effective tool for motivation, revision and assessment. In many lessons, there is more emphasis on 'clearing up' at the end of lessons than reviewing learning.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good in lessons where teaching is good, inadequate in inadequate lessons, and sometimes also inadequate in withdrawal groups. Provision is diluted because too many pupils' needs are wrongly assessed. A significant number of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs are pupils who are underachieving, and supporting these has the effect of weakening provision for those correctly identified with learning difficulties.

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

The curriculum retains some good features from the previous inspection, but because of inconsistencies in the way it is taught, its impact on pupils' learning is inadequate. Introductions to termly topics are effective in gaining pupils' interest because of the way they start with motivating visits or activities such as 'aliens' landing in the playground. However, work in pupils' exercise books is not of a uniformly high standard, nor does it show adequate development of literacy, numeracy and ICT. There is good work in practical projects, for example, in building models of world-famous buildings. Curriculum enrichment is good, through a wide variety of sports, music and other clubs, visitors and visits, including residential visits.

Pastoral care has good features, contributing well to pupils' general understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, safe and develop generally good social skills. The needs of all pupils are supported at significant points in their time at school, and the school gives good support to pupils and their families who find circumstances make them vulnerable. The support and guidance given to potentially vulnerable groups such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable. Personal care and support are generally good but academic guidance and support are not always effective in fostering their learning because of inaccurate assessment. Many strategies to prevent bullying have been introduced and pupils themselves say this is effectively dealt with.

#### These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account:  The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	

# How effective are leadership and management?

The quality of leadership and management is inadequate because it is not being successful in realising its own ambitious vision for the school. This is partly because the targets set do not match the ambition sought. High expectations for pupils' attainment and progress are not apparent in every classroom. The targets set are not regularly being met, so pupils make inadequate progress and gain lower levels than might be expected from their starting points. Systems for tracking, monitoring and analysing the impact of teaching in particular are not consistent, accurate or robust enough to eliminate the inconsistencies in performance which result in pupils making overall inadequate progress.

Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. They are involved in some of the monitoring and evaluation activities associated with the school's self-evaluation, but these have so far had too little impact on the direction and work of the school.

All requirements for safeguarding are met. Policies and practice are in line with government requirements and regularly reviewed. Staff training is up to date. Issues

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

about safety and risk, including internet safety, are integrated into the curriculum and pupils have a sound knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, and most parents agree.

School leaders make effective use of specific funding to ensure that all pupils can take part in all activities such as clubs and visits. The wealth of data about the progress of different groups of pupils is not consistently used to improve that of higher-ability pupils, or those having special educational needs and/or disabilities, so their needs are not adequately met.

The school has analysed its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. It has used this to promote community cohesion strongly within the school and in its outreach to the local community, where it contributes regularly to events such as 'Angel Festival,' Maypole celebrations and Remembrance Sunday. It also involved in charitable fund raising on a global scale and has existing plans to make links with Romania and Senegal, but pupils do have enough understanding of the range of cultures in modern Britain.

#### These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account:  The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

# Views of parents and carers

There was a fairly low return of completed questionnaires from parents and carers, but many of them expressed very positive views about the school. Some wrote praising the school for its values and the way their children have settled happily because of the strong links with the infant school. Several positive comments were received about the support received by children with special educational needs. Inspectors agree with most of these positive comments; however, they found that the quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the progress they make is inadequate overall.

Parents and carers are, mostly concerned with inappropriate behaviour, bullying not dealt with effectively and the progress of higher-ability children. Inspectors agree with parents

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

that many higher-ability pupils do not make enough progress. The views of some of the pupils about behaviour, also reflected those of parents. Several exclusions for unacceptable behaviour in class and in the playground were recorded as taking place last year, but these pupils have since left. During the inspection inspectors observed that inappropriate behaviour only happened when pupils were not adequately challenged by the work in their lessons and an unacceptable amount of noise was not effectively checked by the teacher. During inspection, inspectors found that incidences of bullying are dealt with appropriately by the school.

#### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Higham Ferrers Junior 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 inspector received 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 324 pupils registered at the school.

Statements		ngly ree	Ag	ree	Disa	gree		ngly gree
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	52	40	45	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	53	35	39	5	6	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	35	47	53	8	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	29	50	56	5	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	29	33	50	56	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	31	50	56	7	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	31	54	61	2	2	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)	27	30	56	63	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	30	49	55	3	3	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	33	43	48	13	15	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	29	45	51	9	10	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	30	34	43	48	7	8	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	37	48	54	3	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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 <a href="https://www.ofsted.gov.uk">www.ofsted.gov.uk</a>). 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	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: 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.

■ 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.



22 October 2010

#### **Dear Pupils**

### Inspection of Higham Ferrers Junior School, Rushden, NN10 8ED

Thank you very much for being so helpful to my colleagues and me during our visit. It was very helpful for us to talk to you and see your work. We found that your school is in need of improvement because in the past few years, you haven't been making the amount of progress you should.

There are some things your school does well. You are good at art and design technology and enjoy the exciting topic work you do. Adults take good care of you and in turn, you take care of your younger 'buddies' when they come up from the infant school. You have someone to talk to when you are worried. You all play your part in the school community and are well regarded by your neighbourhood. You learn how to keep yourself safe and healthy; we saw how popular the healthy tuck shop is, and how efficiently it is run by Year 6.

However, the inspection found that standards in English and mathematics are too low, and you are also not doing as well as you could in your use of computers. Although the adults in the school care a lot about you and work hard, those responsible for leading and governing the school need to be more effective in helping the school to improve.

We have asked your teachers, as well as those who lead and govern the school, to make sure the school improves, by giving you more challenging work in lessons, improving the teaching of mathematics as well as the use of the smart boards and other computers. We'd like them to help you to have a better understanding how well you are doing and how you can improve, so that you are more prepared for secondary school. All of this also needs to be checked more carefully by your school leaders and the governing body.

In order to improve this quickly, the school has been put into 'special measures'. Inspectors will visit the school from time to time to check the progress being made.

You can all help your school by getting on sensibly with your work in lessons and always doing your best work. I wish you every success for your future.

Yours sincerely

Carol Worthington Lead inspector

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