

# Kents Hill Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115008
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	357670
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Logan

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>	340
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stewart Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Liz Mulcahy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 September 2007
<b>School address</b>	Kents Hill Road Benfleet SS7 5PS
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 22 lessons taught by 12 different members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Responses to questionnaires completed by staff and 97 parents and carers were also considered.

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

- How much progress pupils made in the last school year and whether the improvement suggested in the school's self-evaluation appears to be well grounded.
- How consistent and effective teaching is, and how well staff use assessment to plan work with sufficient challenge for pupils.
- How accurately both senior leaders and the governing body evaluate the work of the school and whether the school has sufficient capacity to achieve the further improvement necessary.
- The extent to which the governing body has met its obligations in relation to community cohesion.

## Information about the school

This is a much larger than average sized junior school. It serves a residential district in Benfleet and occupies an extensive site, alongside its partner infant school. The school population is very stable and predominantly White British. Most pupils enter directly from the infant school. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The majority of these have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. Few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has had a series of acting and short-term headteachers over the last three years and this has had a significant effect on its operation. Currently, the school is being led and managed by an advisory headteacher appointed by the local authority. An experienced, permanent headteacher is due to take up post in January 2011.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Kents Hill Junior School provides a satisfactory education. However, attainment is rising once again and pupils' progress, though still inconsistent, is steadily improving. Despite the negative effects of an extended period of instability, the school is in good heart. Stable staffing, enthusiastic, committed teachers, well-established middle managers, an increasingly effective governing body and the support of local authority staff have ensured that pupils are making increasingly good progress. Staff are actively tackling the accrued legacy of underperformance, although the benefits have yet fully to emerge in consistently high attainment.

The partnership with parents and carers has been sorely tried in the last two years. While many parents and carers remain very supportive of the school, others have become disillusioned. Most, however, recognise the school's commitment to pupils' well-being and to their good personal development. As a result, pupils attend very regularly, enjoy school very much, feel very safe and the great majority have positive attitudes to learning. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and diet and undertake frequent exercise. Pupils' contribution to the school and their involvement with the local community are both good. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. The school works very hard to support the improved behaviour of the few pupils who find it difficult to engage with learning.

Despite a fall in attainment in 2007 and 2008, effective local authority intervention has had a significant impact on the consistency and quality of teaching in English and mathematics, and this has underpinned the improvements seen. Even so, overall progress is satisfactory at present. Current initiatives to raise outcomes in writing have yet to match the significantly increased progress and above average attainment in mathematics in 2010. Progress in reading is greater than in writing. The focus on literacy and numeracy has meant less time for science and this has affected standards. Teachers are now increasingly skilled in evaluating how well pupils are progressing. The tracking of progress is detailed and teachers' marking is thorough, indicating what should be done to improve. Pupils' personalised targets are used well to promote progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress. Some do better than this because they receive high quality support, with work carefully adapted to their needs. There are occasional planned opportunities for gifted or talented pupils.

While the curriculum is strongly focused on literacy and numeracy, leading to increasingly good attainment, less priority has been given to science. In addition, pupils' information and communication technology skills are not so well-developed, largely because of the limitations of the resources available. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment opportunities are good.

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The governing body has grown considerably in confidence. It has a very good understanding of its role and rigorously analyses the school's performance. Despite past difficulties, the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate, development planning is well-judged, teaching and progress are improving, middle management is effective, governance is good and the support of the local authority has been very effective.

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

- Sustain the trend of improvement in pupils' progress, particularly in writing and science, through:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write for a purpose, and for an extended period, in subjects across the curriculum
  - enabling pupils to undertake more frequent and challenging investigative activities in science.
- Ensure that information and communication technology (ICT) has a greater impact on pupils' learning through:
  - improved access to high quality resources, particularly hardware
  - more effective integration of ICT in day-to-day learning.
- Ensure that school leaders are more responsive to the concerns and expectations of parents and carers.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Although the school lacked direction for some time, external support and rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress is enabling the school to build more successfully on pupils' generally above average attainment when they enter Year 3. More effective teaching and learning have ensured that attainment in mathematics is now at its highest level in at least five years. Good opportunities for practical and investigative tasks are helping to sustain pupils' interest. The school rightly recognises that writing is the next area for improvement.

In many lessons, learning is good. Relationships are a strength. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their work. Work is carefully-planned to match the needs of each group in the class, while offering extension for the most able. In an outstanding Year 4 literacy lesson, pupils were challenged to generate descriptions of a planet. They used a lively combination of pair and individual work to select high-quality images from existing text. They were then encouraged to generate and share their own ideas, responding to the comments of their partners. The brisk pace enabled pupils to make rapid progress in this lesson. Questioning was sharply adjusted to each pupil's level of understanding. A successful Year 6 mathematics lesson on metric measures included opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and individually to solve mathematical problems. The focus on pupils evaluating their own level of understanding helped to extend confidence and independence in their work.

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Behaviour is good and exclusions continue to decline. Pupils treat each other, and adults, with courtesy. The school council organises fund-raising activities and gives pupils good access to the democratic process. Older pupils take responsibility for those who are younger as buddies, and enthusiastically undertake many community tasks as prefects and house captains. Although spirituality and multicultural awareness are not systematically developed, social and moral development are good. Adequately-developed basic skills ensure that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for future study and later life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<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?

Although progress over time remains uneven, a significant proportion of the teaching seen was good. Planning is thorough, providing challenging activities which are well matched to pupils' needs. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to develop independence as learners. Even though the unreliability of the mini-computers constrains pupils' opportunities at present, several mathematics lessons provided opportunities for pupils to engage in challenging research activities. Teachers' evaluation of pupils' understanding and progress is a particular strength, following considerable training and development in the last year. Teachers question pupils closely to ascertain how well they have understood key ideas. Pupils make frequent use of self-evaluation strategies, both oral and written, and build the skills to evaluate the work of others. Teachers' marking provides clear guidance as to next steps, while pupils have a

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range of targets to help take their learning forward. Taken together, these strategies are contributing significantly to pupils' improved progress.

The curriculum effectively supports the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Investigative science, however, has taken a back seat recently, and attainment has not been sustained. The development of ICT skills is constrained by a lack of hardware which is fit for purpose. Sports partnership links enhance provision in physical education. Pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education is satisfactorily promoted although the school has not engaged with recently-developed programmes.

Staff care for pupils well. The school is responsive to pupils' needs and concerns. Transition arrangements are satisfactory. The school works closely with support agencies, particularly for pupils with specific needs. There is good practice in supporting the health, social, behavioural and transition needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The specialist skills of learning support staff are used very well to promote pupils' learning and well-being. Systems to promote good attendance are rigorous and effective.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Despite recent instability, the effective leadership of the advisory headteacher has ensured that morale is high at present. Staff are well motivated, committed to the school, and have high expectations of pupils' learning and of their personal development. The school has worked hard to sustain its partnership with parents and carers, in particular to update parents through regular meetings. This has generally been a successful strategy. The school's partnership with other schools is satisfactory. The leadership and management of teaching and learning, with support from the local authority, has ensured a highly consistent approach to, for example, planning, the management of pupils' behaviour and the presentation of written work. It has also had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Weaknesses in teaching are followed up systematically.

Good governance, effective middle management and active local authority support all contribute to the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. Members of the governing body have raised their game considerably in the last two years. They monitor the school's work closely, particularly pupils' progress and attainment, and provide both effective challenge and good support. They have a very clear view of where the priorities lie. They have been proactive in engaging the support of the local authority and in developing links with the infant school. The governing body ensures that legal requirements are met. A high priority is given to pupils' safety and well-being and the procedures for safeguarding pupils are

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good, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined. In addition, procedures in relation to first aid and fire safety are rigorous. Potential discrimination is tackled rigorously and the school is a cohesive community. Links with the local community are a strength. There are opportunities to learn about other faiths and communities through emerging international links. However, provision is limited in relation to more diverse communities within the United Kingdom.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was similar to that found in other primary schools. Many are pleased with the school and what it offers their children. As one said, 'The transition from the infant school to the juniors was fantastic and the teachers are very approachable.' A significant number of parents and carers, however, feel that their children have been let down and are frustrated by the instability in leadership over a lengthy period. They feel that this has affected many aspects of school life, in particular pupils' progress and their behaviour. Parents and carers also feel that communication has, at times, been poor. The inspection team investigated these concerns and found that the school is currently in a stronger position than it has been for some time. Much of the teaching is good and this is having a real impact on the progress pupils are making. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons and for a high proportion of the pupils. The school is calm and operating as would be expected. As some parents and carers recognise, the governing body has developed considerably and is now well-placed to extend effective leadership as the school enters a new phase. While there have undoubtedly been shortcomings in day-to-day communication, the regular parents' meetings arranged by the local authority and the governing body have been crucial in keeping parents and carers informed of the options open to the school at each stage.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kents Hill 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 inspection team received 97 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 340 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	34	51	53	7	7	4	4
The school keeps my child safe	45	46	45	46	3	3	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	19	56	58	14	14	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	27	44	45	15	15	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	24	25	52	54	14	14	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	23	55	57	13	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	27	63	65	4	4	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	28	55	57	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	25	47	48	18	19	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	12	47	48	23	24	8	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	19	47	48	21	22	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	13	13	35	36	32	33	7	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	29	47	48	16	16	1	1

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



11 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Kents Hill Junior School, Benfleet, SS7 5PS**

Thank you for making us welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school, and hearing your views on the school and about your work. We found that while yours is, at present, a satisfactory school, it has many strengths as a community. These are our main findings.

You work hard and behave well.

You are making better progress and, while standards remain average in English by the end of Year 6, they are now above average in mathematics.

You undertake lots of jobs and make a good contribution to the school and local community.

Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, there are lots of good lessons and you mostly feel that lessons are enjoyable.

You attend school often, feel very safe and have a good awareness of the importance of eating healthily and staying fit.

Although the curriculum is satisfactory, because neither science nor ICT are particularly strong, literacy and numeracy are taught well; those of you who find learning difficult get good support.

Despite disruption, school leaders ensure that you are well looked after.

We are asking the school to make these changes so that you can do even better.

Provide you with opportunities to develop your writing skills across the subjects and to build your skills as investigative scientists.

Improve the resources for ICT and ensure that you use computers as often as possible to support your learning in other subjects.

Listen carefully to what parents and carers think about the school and try to be responsive to their views.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan  
Lead inspector

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