

Kimpton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117118
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358086
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Reavell
Headteacher	Marion Stewart-Smith
Date of previous school inspection	27 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, observed eight teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and a group of pupils, and talked with pupils in lessons. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, school development planning, minutes of governing body meetings and pupils' work. Inspectors also scrutinised the 101 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from staff and a sample of pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which higher expectations are increasing the level of challenge and increasing the rate of progress in Years 3 to 6, especially for girls and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How much improvements to assessment procedures have strengthened monitoring and extended the accountability of staff.
- The extent to which the senior leadership team and the governing body are influencing the school's direction and performance.

Information about the school

Kimpton is a smaller than average sized primary school. The very large majority of pupils are from families of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There have been significant changes to staffing, including a change of headteacher, since the last inspection.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into the Nursery class. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools Status and the Eco-Schools Silver certificate.

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

3

Main findings

This is a good school. It provides a caring and supportive environment that places a strong focus on enhancing pupils' self-esteem and raising achievement. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Through the school's effective links with outside agencies, local schools and the community, pupils willingly take a full part in supporting local and international charities. Pupils, in the role of play leaders and sports ambassadors, help to manage activities at lunchtimes and represent the school during competitions. Pupils' good personal outcomes are reflected in their considerate behaviour during lessons and at lunch time. Their involvement in the many activities and popular clubs provides opportunities for them to develop confidence and hone their performing skills, which include the playing of musical instruments. This picture is reflected in the questionnaires completed by pupils, where they indicated that they enjoy school very much.

The headteacher acknowledges that leaders and staff have not been sufficiently involved in seeing through the changes she has introduced for sustained improvement. Their lack of involvement in implementing procedures and processes has led to some initiatives not being fully embedded before new ones are introduced. Consequently, some staff, although fully committed to school improvement, have felt uneasy about the pace of change. This picture is seen in the comments made by a minority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire. They indicated that they are not kept well enough informed about developments and the reasons behind them, or sufficiently involved in their children's learning. With the support of the governing body, the headteacher is beginning to resolve these issues.

The push for consistently good teaching is evident in the continual review of classroom practice. Topics that link different subjects provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their investigative skills and work on activities that interest them. They also encourage pupils to write for a range of purposes and to delve into the meanings of different words. Good relationships are used well to raise academic expectations. Consequently, pupils are progressing well in lessons that are, typically, pitched at the right level and lift their interests.

The school's awareness of its strengths and weaknesses is informed by increasingly accurate and effective self-evaluation processes, such as the systems for monitoring pupils' progress. Its vision for future development is underpinned by high expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels is not yet fully developed and, given these circumstances, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory rather than good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - giving all leaders clear roles and responsibilities
 - ensuring that leaders are fully involved in the changes planned for school improvement and given responsibility for monitoring and evaluating them
 - ensuring that staff are accountable for standards and improving outcomes for all pupils.
 - Strengthen links with parents and carers by:
 - increasing the range of methods of communicating between home and school
 - keeping them up to date about the changes being made for school improvement and the reasons behind them
 - involving them more in their children's learning through planned meetings and workshops.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' enjoyment of learning, as seen particularly in their eagerness to become involved in lively and engaging activities in English, mathematics, science and music, is characteristic of lessons. The pace of learning is good, although it is uneven with small differences between classes. Pupils work well independently of teachers in small groups and readily share information, showing a determination to get the tasks right. In English, they write imaginatively when given the opportunity to work creatively, using a wide range of descriptive language to persuade the reader over environmental issues. Pupils are eager to apply rules in mathematics to find the areas of different shapes, for example. They also show great satisfaction in exploring ideas and explaining the reasons behind their answers during practical science. In music, pupils work collaboratively when playing the drums and they sing tunefully and with much self-assurance during assemblies. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress made by boys and girls, or those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Children join the Nursery with broadly expected starting points and make good gains through to the end of Reception. Attainment is above average, as indicated by the results of the 2010 national tests and assessments for pupils in Year 6. Following a dip in 2008, attainment levels rose substantially. School tracking data show that learning and progress are good and improving securely and quickly. Pupils in the current Year 6 are reaching higher levels of attainment than last year's group, with a significant number working at levels above those expected for their age.

Pupils say they like coming to school because they enjoy the activities and feel secure in a supportive environment. These positive attitudes are reflected in their above-average attendance. Pupils show interest and respect for different people's feelings, when considering the plight of disabled soldiers, for example. Pupils are considerate towards each other, polite and courteous. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, and staff are working to increase pupils' knowledge of communities in other parts of this country and beyond.

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Pupils' good understanding of living healthily is evident in the way they talk about the importance of eating different kinds of food and the need for regular exercise. Pupils in Year 6 act as play leaders at lunchtime and help out in the eco-garden, where vegetables are grown for the school kitchen. The latter is reflected in the Eco-Schools silver certificate. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to represent the views of others and help make decisions regarding playground equipment and the installation of drinking taps, for example.

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	2
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	2
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?

Good subject knowledge, lively activities and strong relationships are key strengths of teaching. Incisive and probing questioning often gives pupils opportunities to think about their work and reflect on the answers. Topics, such as those that encourage imaginative writing and link different subjects, successfully grab pupils' interest and hold their attention. Consequently, pupils willingly become engaged in their learning and want to find out more for themselves. Assessment procedures are used effectively to guide lesson planning, although learning intentions are not always precise enough. Marking is constructive but does not consistently give pupils enough information about what they need to do to improve. Just occasionally, pupils are noisy and are not fully engaged in their work. Informative displays often celebrate pupils' work and give an insight into the diversity of the curriculum, which provides a carefully considered balance between basic

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skills in English and mathematics and the development of pupils' performance and creative skills in subjects such as art, music, and physical education. The teaching of French gives an additional positive dimension. Pupils' learning experiences are further enriched by outside specialists, including music tutors, visits to places of interest and a number of clubs.

The school provides good support for pupils' personal development and pastoral care. Staff know the pupils well and close links have been established with families. Attention to pupils' health and well-being is reflected not just in the wide range of opportunities for physical activity, but also in the provision of healthy school meals. Individualised programmes of support are made for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement, covering a broad range of personal and learning needs. Individual achievement is managed effectively through improved tracking of pupils' attainment and progress. Targets are realistic but challenging. Evaluations lead to well-timed interventions, which reinforce pupils' literacy skills and successfully build confidence.

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?

The headteacher has introduced a number of changes since her appointment, which include modifications to the teaching of English and mathematics, a reorganisation of staff and new assessment procedures. These modifications were introduced to sharpen the focus on key priorities and to build on improvements. The headteacher recognises that the pace of change has been rapid and that all senior leaders have yet to play a full and active part in the drive for sustained improvement. The way that changes have been brought about has led to a feeling of frustration among some staff. This picture is also reflected by a minority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the school runs smoothly and staff are totally committed not only to strengthening each pupil's confidence, but also to raising achievement. Secure systems are being established to ensure that this ethos is maintained even through staff changes. The promotion of equality and approaches to tackling any form of discrimination are good. As a result, all groups of pupils make similar progress.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It has strengthened its monitoring role and readily challenges the school's work. However, it has yet to hold all senior leaders to account for tackling weaknesses and improving outcomes for all pupils. The governing body ensures that policies are systematically reviewed and resources are closely targeted at educational need. Attention to pupils' safety is integral to the school's work and safeguarding procedures are securely established. Local services and agencies are used

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well to enhance the safety and well-being of pupils experiencing difficult circumstances and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Community cohesion is strongly promoted within the school and in the local community. Being at the hub of the community, the school demonstrates a thorough understanding of local needs and challenges through its links with outside agencies and the way it evaluates its effectiveness. However, the school knows that it has not yet developed links with areas further afield in this country and others to the same level, and is appropriately planning to do so.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	2
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

Staff, working effectively as a team, have successfully established a welcoming environment in which children are nurtured and cherished from the start. Good links have been established with parents and carers so that children settle quickly, are eager to learn and make good progress. They make especially good progress in their personal and social skills and in their physical development. Effective assessment procedures are beginning to ensure that staff have accurate and reliable information about children's progress. Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, is good.

Children listen attentively and chatter enthusiastically about their work. The school makes effective use of both the indoor and outside areas, which provide a wide range of resources to develop confidence and promote independent learning. Children happily move from one activity to another. Questioning is often used well to probe their understanding and capture their interest. Themed topics, such as the Chinese New Year, ensure all areas of learning are covered, with a particular focus on early reading, writing and number skills.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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 majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaires expressed positive views about the school's work. A minority of parents or carers made written comments. Some of these expressed considerable satisfaction with the school and included positive remarks about the caring and welcoming environment, the quality of the staff and the range of learning opportunities. However, the majority of the written comments included reservations over a number of issues. These included concerns about: leadership and management and, in particular, the pace of change and the degree of communication between school and home; the amount of progress their children are making; behaviour; and changes in staffing. The school is introducing a series of regular meetings to give parents and carers opportunities to discuss their children's learning. The governing body is also planning a series of meetings to talk about their role and the school's priorities for the future. The school's website is being developed. The inspectors judged that pupils are making more rapid progress than they did before. Behaviour was good, although occasionally pupils were noisy in lessons. Staffing is now more stable than it has been in the past.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kimpton Primary 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 101 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 188 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	38	55	54	6	6	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	41	41	52	51	7	7	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	24	24	51	50	19	19	5	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	21	46	46	20	20	8	8
The teaching is good at this school	27	27	57	56	11	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	25	54	53	14	14	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	30	61	60	8	8	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)	21	21	55	54	11	11	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	15	53	52	23	23	4	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	15	47	47	23	23	10	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	22	44	44	20	20	7	7
The school is led and managed effectively	21	21	35	35	17	17	15	15
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	23	51	50	15	15	3	3

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kimpton Primary School, Hitchin, SG4 8RB

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school - thank you for making us feel so welcome. Yours is a good school where you feel safe and benefit from good care and support. You told us it is also a place where you want to be, make friends, and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the many exciting activities and interesting clubs. You show a keen interest in other people. The majority of your parents and carers expressed satisfaction with the school.

Here are some other important things about your school

You make good progress in lessons, because you are taught well.

You attend regularly and respond enthusiastically to activities that encourage you to think creatively.

You make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school and contribute successfully to local events.

You have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating.

To make things even better for you, we have asked your school to:

- develop the role of senior leaders so that they are more involved in the running of the school and are able to keep an even closer eye on how well you are doing
- improve communication with your parents and carers so that they have a better understanding of what you are doing and are aware of the changes being made in the school.

We wish each one of you every success in your future education and hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now. You can all help the school by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead inspector

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