

Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 117145
Local Authority Hertfordshire
Inspection number 358093

Inspection dates 7–8 December 2010

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 206

Appropriate authorityThe governing bodyChairPaul DochertyHeadteacherPete RoseDate of previous school inspection2 July 2008

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 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 146 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 the following.

- The extent to which higher expectations are increasing the level of challenge and increasing the rate of progress in Years 3 to 6.
- How much improvements to assessment procedures have strengthened monitoring and extended the accountability of staff and members of the governing body.
- The extent to which the senior leadership team and the governing body are influencing the school's direction and performance.

Information about the school

Colney Heath is smaller than most other primary schools. The 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.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into the Nursery. The school has achieved the Activemark award and national Healthy Schools status.

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 which serves its community well. Its outstanding care and support places a high priority on enhancing pupils' self-esteem and raising achievement. Such positive features are reflected in many aspects of pupils' well-developed personal qualities, including their interest in what they do and their sheer enjoyment of learning. Pupils behave exceptionally well and have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. One parent's comments sum up the views of others: 'My daughter has had a fantastic experience at Colney Heath.....she actually gets upset when she is too poorly to attend.'

The tenacity of the headteacher and the strengths in collective leadership are the key factors in driving improvement. Systematic monitoring and rigorous tracking systems have been established. Staff are held accountable for standards in their subject areas. The school's awareness and vision are well informed by an accurate self-evaluation. As a consequence, members of the governing body and school leaders have a clear understanding of where the school is now and of the priorities that need to be addressed to maintain recent improvements. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

The school knows that the quality of teaching and learning is at the heart of improved performance. The drive for highly effective teaching is supported by the systematic review of classroom practice. Accurate assessment procedures support successful teaching, which fully engages pupils and motivates them with creative and imaginative activities. As a consequence, pupils are progressing well in lessons that are, typically, pitched at the right level and hold their interests. However, the school knows that it must do more to ensure that more-able pupils are consistently challenged throughout all lessons. Recent improvements to performance levels reflect the good progress, effective teaching and the range of rich learning opportunities in a broad and creative curriculum. Pupils currently in Year 6, including the more able, are on course to reach higher levels this year. Intervention work, including well-tailored support for individual pupils, is successfully supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils' good and outstanding personal outcomes are reflected in their maturity, enthusiasm and involvement in the many activities that support the smooth running of the school. Popular clubs and after-school activities provide pupils with many opportunities to develop confidence, and refine their creative and performance skills. Pupils are respectful and value the views of others, but have a limited knowledge of communities in this country and in other parts of the world. Opportunities for developing these aspects of community cohesion are missed when linking learning together across different parts of the curriculum.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better by always providing challenging tasks that are pitched at the right level, particularly for the more-able pupils.
 - Extend the strategy for promoting community cohesion by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to appreciate and value people from communities in this country and around the world
 - ensuring that these are included in planning when linking subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' sheer enjoyment of learning, as seen in their eagerness to become involved in engaging and well-paced activities in English and mathematics, is a characteristic of lessons. They work particularly well in small groups and readily share information, showing a resolve to complete the tasks and get them right. Pupils worked well independently of the teacher, for example, when working in pairs and small groups in preparation for creating a mood in creative writing. Pupils also spoke confidently about the different techniques used in creative writing that successfully capture the reader's interests. Pupils participated with huge enthusiasm when practising musical phrases from rhymes of different fairytales during English. Pupils also showed great satisfaction in completing tasks when solving number problems, for example, during mathematics. In assembly, pupils sang enthusiastically, tunefully and with confidence.

Children start school with below expected levels of knowledge and understanding in several key aspects, including communication. Improvements are such that pupils' attainment has been lifted by Year 6 to average and all groups of pupils achieve well. School data shows that levels of attainment and the rate of progress are improving rapidly and securely, especially in Years 3 to 6. There are no significant variations in the rates of progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or by the very small number of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils say they like coming to school because they enjoy making friends, learn lots of things and enjoy participating in the many exciting activities. These positive attitudes are evident in the above-average attendance. Pupils are exceptionally courteous and respectful. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good and pupils show much interest and respect for different people's feelings, in their involvement in community projects and in fund-raising activities. However, pupils have limited opportunities to learn about different cultures. Pupils' excellent understanding of living healthily is reflected in the school's nationally recognised award. It is also evident in the way they talk confidently about the importance of eating different kinds of food and drinking fluids, the need for regular exercise and its impact on the heart. The large majority of pupils take part in regular exercise and participate in sports events. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to represent the views of others and to make decisions regarding healthy options for school lunches, for example. Supported by the school's projects to encourage enterprise, such as running a stationery shop as a fund-raising event for charity, pupils' personal skills are developing into important qualities for when they leave school.

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:	3
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	2
and their progress	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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:	2
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, positive relationships and effective use of support staff are key strengths of teaching. Incisive 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 capture pupils' interest and grab their attention. However, on occasion, some activities do not always expect enough from pupils, especially the more-able pupils. Assessment is used well to guide planning. Marking is supportive and relates progress to pupils' individual targets

Attractive and informative displays give an insight into the richness and range of pupils' learning experiences. The school has developed a curriculum that provides a carefully constructed balance between basic skills in English and mathematics and the enhancement of pupils' creative and performance skills, which is reflected in the award of the Activemark. The school has rightly identified the need to improve pupils' skills in English and mathematics, building on the success already sustained in Years 1 and 2. Planning links different subjects and pupils are given opportunities to reinforce their learning and develop their skills through topics. Skills, including the ability to work collaboratively and independently are encouraged. The teaching of French adds an additional positive dimension. The curriculum is well supported by the effective use of information and communication technology, which enhances learning and gives pupils access to a range of resources. Pupils' learning experiences are further enriched by a

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

number of popular clubs, residential trips, visits to places of local interest, workshops and the use of subject specialists from within the local consortium of schools.

The outstanding support for pupils' personal development and pastoral care is recognised and valued by parents and carers. One parent's comments sum up the views of others: 'I value the sense of community at the school. The teachers are always very approachable....and the transition arrangements between years are excellent.' 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. With the assistance from a number of outside agencies, individualised programmes of exceptional support are made for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement, covering a broad range of personal and learning needs. Pupils' progress is very closely monitored through detailed tracking of their attainment. Close liaison with parents and outside agencies and tailored individual attention enables those pupils with the greatest needs to gain confidence and self-esteem.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, the headteacher, with close support from the governing body and staff, has sharpened the focus on key priorities. This has led to a systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring and a greater awareness of the path the school needs to follow to sustain improved performance levels. Strong collective leadership has developed a school that is committed not only to strengthening each pupil's self-esteem but also to raising achievement. Systematic monitoring has led to improvements in teaching and, consequently, to more rapid progress in lessons. The promotion of equality and approaches to tackling any form of discrimination are good. The school's close analysis of comparative data helps staff to identify the needs of individual pupils at an early stage. As a result, groups of pupils make similar progress, although some pupils, especially the higher attainers, could make faster progress in some classes.

The governing body is supportive of the school. The members' awareness of the community, understanding of data and knowledge about pupils' progress provide the information needed to challenge the school's work. Attention to pupils' safety and safeguarding is integral to the school's work and good-quality assurance and risk assessment systems have been established. Detailed and well-organised procedures ensure that safeguarding arrangements are carefully followed. The school has clear management responsibilities to ensure pupils are always safe, and the governing body rigorously monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of its policies and practices. Local

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services and agencies are used effectively to enhance the 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 community. The school demonstrates a good understanding of local needs and challenges. It makes effective use of resources that are available within the consortium. The school provides a number of opportunities for pupils to gain a good understanding about people's backgrounds within the local community, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of national and international diversity. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and play an active part in school events, including fund-raising projects and school performances. Workshops help parents to understand their children's different learning experiences.

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	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

Children settle quickly, are eager to learn and make good progress. Close links have been established with parents, and caring staff have successfully established a calm and welcoming environment in which children are nurtured from the start. Good arrangements have been established for when children progress from Nursery to Reception. In keeping with the rest of the school, attention to the welfare and safety of children is very strong. Support is good for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who are more vulnerable. Well-planned, themed topics ensure that all areas of learning are covered, with a particular focus on reading, speaking, listening, writing, and number skills. Children listen attentively and chatter enthusiastically about their work. They happily move from one activity to another.

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

The provision is well managed and well-established procedures ensure that staff have accurate and reliable information about children's progress. Detailed planning and a range of stimulating activities take good account of the below-expected starting points and wide ability range. Adults move seamlessly in and out of activities, responding to individuals or taking part in larger group activities. Adults give closely targeted support to activities directed by the teacher as well as those which children choose for themselves. Questioning is often used well to probe children's understanding and capture their interest.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		
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

A well-above-average proportion of the school's parents and carers returned the questionnaires. The very large majority of the responses were positive. A number of parents and carers made written comments and many of these expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. These included positive remarks about the caring and supportive community and the quality of the staff. However, some questionnaires recorded reservations over a number of issues. These included the amount of progress their children are making and communication. The inspection found evidence to indicate that pupils are making more rapid progress than they did before, although those who learn quickly could be challenged more in some lessons. The school uses a number of strategies to make contact with parents, including regular newsletters and electronic mail, but the governing body is in the process of developing a parents' forum to help improve communication.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery 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 146 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 206 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	66	46	32	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	91	62	51	35	4	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	66	45	72	49	2	1	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	69	47	66	45	6	4	4	3
The teaching is good at this school	74	51	62	42	4	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	46	69	47	6	4	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	50	69	47	1	1	1	1
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)	63	43	68	47	6	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	66	45	69	47	4	3	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	35	75	51	11	8	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	38	78	53	5	3	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	68	47	65	45	9	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	82	56	57	39	4	3	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

	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 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	s of a pupil in their	learning,
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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.



9 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School, St Albans, AL4 ONP

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found while we were with you. Yours is a good school where you feel safe and benefit from outstanding care and support. You told us it is also a place where you want to be, attend regularly, make friends, and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the many interesting clubs and exciting activities. The very large majority of your parents expressed considerable satisfaction with the school

Here are some other important things about your school.

You make good progress in lessons.

You behave exceptionally well.

You respond enthusiastically to school activities, and lively and interesting lessons.

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

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

To make things even better for you, we have asked the headteacher and staff to:

- make sure that teaching always challenges those of you who learn quickly
- help you to understand more about people and communities in other parts of this country and the wider world.

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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