

Holtsmere End Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117336
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379395
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

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	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Whitford
Headteacher	Patricia Evison
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
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Age group	7–11
Inspection date(s)	22–23 February 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Sheridan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Thomas Moran

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent most of their time looking at learning. They observed 23 lessons taught by nine teachers. Inspectors listened to children read and talked to several groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They discussed issues such as planning, training and performance management with several teachers. Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders, teachers and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, work in pupils' books, systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring notes from governors and senior leaders. Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff and 68 parents and carers through their responses to the inspection questionnaires.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average size junior school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils who are believed to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as disabled or with special educational needs is below average. There is privately-run childcare on the site, which is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The school currently meets the nationally set floor standards in English and mathematics, which are the minimum expectation set for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	4

Key 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 significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management.
- The school is not satisfactory because leaders have not demonstrated the capacity to improve the quality of teaching over time in order to accelerate pupils’ progress and raise their attainment so that these outcomes reflect good achievement.
- School leaders have an unrealistic view of the effectiveness of the school because self-evaluation is based on inaccurate data about pupils’ progress. The weaker teaching that exists in some classes has not been recognised or challenged. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are inadequate.
- Most teaching is satisfactory with a small amount that is good. However, there are several key weaknesses that prevent more pupils making good progress. Activities are not suitably challenging for all groups of pupils and, as a consequence, progress is uneven. Marking too often does not give pupils the opportunity to improve their work. Teachers’ questioning in class does not routinely encourage pupils to think deeply and justify their views. While there have been some improvements to teaching, the impact of these varies too much throughout the school. The local authority has been instrumental in providing expertise for training but leaders in school have been slow to monitor the extent to which all teachers have embedded this new practice.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points to reach standards of attainment that are broadly in line with national averages. They enjoy school and talk with a genuine fondness about their teachers. However, boys have

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outperformed girls in mathematics for the last two years.

- Pupils say they feel safe and that any occasional incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively by their teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in monitoring, evaluating and driving school improvement by:
 - ensuring robust systems are in place for gathering accurate information about the quality of teaching and learning
 - making sure that self-evaluation is based on a range of sources of evidence so leaders can plan improvements with a secure understanding of strengths and weaknesses
 - ensuring that subject leaders rigorously monitor the effectiveness of teaching strategies on the quality of learning for all pupils
 - making provision to manage, coach and support teachers so they develop their understanding and practice.
- Ensure that most teaching is good and any inadequate features are eradicated by:
 - developing teachers' competence in asking questions that encourage pupils to think deeply and justify their answers
 - ensuring that marking and feedback are consistent and sharply focused on helping pupils improve their work
 - ensuring that activities in class are suitably challenging for all pupils so they contribute effectively to their achievement.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory so they reach broadly average standards of attainment in English and mathematics. Work in pupils' books in most classes shows satisfactory progress over time. However, pupils' progress is uneven as they move through the school. The school has taken steps to ensure that progress is more rapid in Year 3 so pupils do not fall behind here, as they have done in the past. This improved progress is not maintained in Year 4, particularly for more able pupils, because some lessons are not consistently challenging. There is some better teaching again in Years 5 and 6 so pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. Boys have reached higher levels of attainment than girls in mathematics for the past two years. While girls reach broadly average standards in this subject, little has been done to monitor or understand the reasons why they do less well than boys.

Pupils develop effective reading strategies so they can access the curriculum and are

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appropriately prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils who enter the school with below expected standards of reading are given extra support and listened to read regularly. However, the school does not have a systematic approach to teaching these pupils the sounds that letters make.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress over time. However, this is also uneven because some of the tasks that they are given do not sharply focus on improving their skills. On some occasions, teaching assistants do too much for pupils rather than providing support that enables them to complete tasks themselves. Parents and carers are generally positive about the progress pupils make and the quality of teaching. A few expressed some concerns about the progress their children have made and inspection evidence shows that some pupils are not making the progress they are capable of.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and pupils state that they feel teaching is good, though a few parents expressed concerns. Inspectors found the impact of teaching is satisfactory overall but uneven. In the best lessons, teachers effectively engage pupils in interesting activities that capture their imaginations and encourage them to work hard. In these lessons pupils know what they are learning about and they effectively use their teacher's guidance to improve their work. However, in some lessons, feedback is not sufficiently focused on helping pupils make small steps to improve their work. Too often, comments in books are congratulatory without providing a commentary about how to make work better. This is particularly evident for more able pupils who may make limited mistakes in tasks, but whose work could still be improved to be even more effective.

The main reason why teaching remains satisfactory rather than good is because, at times, insufficient account is taken of different groups and their needs. Work in books shows that the pitch of activities does not always match the ability levels of pupils. The use of questions by teachers varies considerably. Some teachers effectively ask questions of different groups of pupils that allow them to think deeply about the work they are doing. However, other teachers rely on closed questions and do not provide the opportunity for pupils to justify their answers, and this limits the opportunities to develop a full understanding of concepts, particularly in mathematics. Relationships between pupils and adults are very positive and pupils are keen to please their teachers. However, when pupils do not work as hard as they could, teachers are sometimes too quick to praise and encourage their efforts and this reinforces the acceptance of poor attitudes to learning.

The curriculum is interesting and, in most classes, provides a range of opportunities for pupils to think about issues that support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In some classes, topic work provides opportunities for pupils to learn about interesting subjects and practise literacy and numeracy skills. However, the quality of work in topic books varies considerably. While some is of a high quality, a small amount shows some teachers have low expectations and, in these books,

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activities are often uninspiring.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are usually orderly and polite around school. Pupils say that that their peers usually behave well and bullying of any type hardly happens. A few parents and carers state that lessons are sometimes disrupted by pupils' behaviour and a minority of staff who completed the questionnaire stated that behaviour is not always well managed. Pupils say that they know the systems for managing behaviour and these usually work. Inspectors found that behaviour is often good with pupils working hard to meet the expectations of their teachers. In most classes, gentle reminders ensure that pupils remain on task. However, at times, pupils become disengaged from their work, usually because the tasks they have been given are not well matched to their needs and interest, or they are given too long to work on a task. When this is the case, the behaviour of some pupils occasionally deteriorates. Pupils say they feel safe in school. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive so pupils feel secure in talking to their teachers about any problems, worries or concerns. Pupils understand about how to stay safe. Opportunities exist within the curriculum for pupils to learn about safety, for example, when using the internet. Pupils learn about right and wrong and reflect on the consequences of their actions.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are inadequate because leaders have failed to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the school and plan appropriate school improvement strategies. Leaders are too reliant on the support of the local authority to sustain improvements. Too much of the information that is held by leaders about pupils' performance is inaccurate and there are insufficient systems to check pupil progress data against the work that they are producing. Leaders have made some decisions that have supported improvements, such as the strengthening of teaching in Year 3 to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. Leaders have also been responsive to the local authority's involvement in the school and they identified some areas where they have needed extra support and expertise. However, the professional development provided has not had sufficient impact as it has not been followed up by monitoring and additional support.

There is a significant lack of consistency between the school's self-evaluation and the practice found in classes. Subject leaders demonstrated, during inspection, their ability to evaluate the quality of teaching and progress effectively. However, they have not had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects rigorously enough. Consequently, these leaders assume that all teachers have taken the same messages from training and are working at the same level. Weaker teaching remains unchallenged. Little is done to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. As a result, leaders are unclear about whether the attainment gaps found between boys and girls over the last two years still exist.

The curriculum is satisfactory because it provides a sound framework for satisfactory

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teaching and achievement. There is appropriate coverage across all areas of the national curriculum. Whole-school themes are used well to celebrate and learn about important local and national events. For example, much has been done to celebrate the work of the forthcoming Olympics and this is contributing well to pupils' sense of national identity and cultural diversity.

Governance is satisfactory. All statutory duties are met. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and effective. Governors monitor the work of the school and the effectiveness of actions that have taken place. Their effectiveness is limited by the inaccurate data that they are often presented with. However, their effectiveness has improved since the last inspection; in particular, they have good insights on issues linked to school improvement.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holtsmere End Junior School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7JZ

You may remember that I came with another inspector to your school recently. We found that you are making satisfactory progress in your lessons and you are doing particularly well in reading. We know that your teachers have been working hard to develop new ways of marking and giving you feedback. We can see that your teachers are writing lots of guidance in your books. We have asked them to make sure this helps you to improve your work. This is important even when you have not made mistakes in your work. This might mean helping you write different types of sentences or thinking about more efficient ways of problem solving in mathematics. You can help by very carefully reading and responding to what teachers write in your books.

We have also asked your teachers to ask you questions and set you work that makes you think more. This means that all of your work is set at the right level with none of it seeming too easy or hard.

Your school does not do some of the things that would make sure teaching gets better all the time. We found out that some of teaching is not as good as the leaders in your school thought. It is really important that your headteacher and other leaders know how effective things are in your school so we have asked them to check very carefully on how well your learning is improving. We have placed the school in a category called a 'notice to improve.' This means that your school will get some extra help to improve your education and inspectors will come back shortly to make sure these changes take place.

I would like to finish by thanking you for the time you gave to talking with us about your school or completing our questionnaire. Your views were very important in helping us come to our judgements.

You have my best wishes for the future.
Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

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