

# Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117266
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379383
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ronald Cohen

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	149
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Colin Crook
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mari Tomaney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 February 2009
<b>School address</b>	Denham Way Maple Cross Rickmansworth WD3 9SS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 773189
<b>Fax number</b>	01923 711281
<b>Email address</b>	admin@maplecross.herts.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	15–16 November 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	379383

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011



## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and observed six teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including development planning, pupils' work, safeguarding arrangements, self-evaluation records, school policies and performance data. Questionnaires from 61 parents and carers, 51 pupils and 6 staff were scrutinised.

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

- The progress made by boys and girls in writing and numeracy, particularly but not exclusively in Years 3 to 6.
- The effectiveness of teaching to help pupils make maximum progress.
- The effectiveness of the leadership of the school in raising performance and driving improvement.

## Information about the school

Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School is well below average in size for a school of its type. It has an above-average proportion of girls. A large majority of pupils are of White British origin and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average. However, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection the number of pupils at the school has increased significantly. The school has Healthy School status.

## 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, in which pupils make good progress. It provides a good caring and supportive environment, particularly for those pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. Pupils feel happy and safe in the school because of the excellent relationships and good safeguarding arrangements, and consequently they enjoy school. As one said, 'School is great to be in because it's friendly and teachers are nice. We have fun but we also learn lots of new things'. Pupils know well how to keep healthy and fit, and they are well behaved and courteous.

The school's growing numbers show its increasing popularity with parents and carers. This is reflected in their very positive comments on questionnaires. For example, one wrote: 'The school is a happy place for children and I feel very confident that my children are being developed educationally, emotionally and socially'.

Pupils' achievement is good. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress through the school and by the end of Year 6 they attain broadly average standards. Standards are rising, but those in writing continue to lag a little behind those attained in mathematics and reading. A weakness within writing is the lack of use of extensive vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress because good support is provided for them.

The curriculum is good. It is well organised and imaginative and pupils' learning is enriched by many exciting in-school activities, as well as a range of visits and visitors. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The majority of lessons observed were good. A small minority of lessons are, however, no better than satisfactory. In these the challenge and the opportunities for independent learning are less pronounced than in the better lessons. Moreover, teachers' assessments of learning during the lesson are not so sharp, so activities are not quickly adapted to move pupils forward more rapidly in their learning.

The school is well led by the headteacher, who is well supported by her deputy and staff. Morale is high and teamwork is strong. Self-evaluation is effective, drawing on observation of lessons and analysis of data. As a result, teaching and progress have improved since the last inspection. The knowledgeable and challenging governing body is systematically involved in monitoring the school to hold it to account in all areas. The school gives good value for money, and demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

- Raise standards in writing by
  - formalising opportunities for pupils to encounter and learn extensive vocabulary when they are reading or listening
  - encouraging pupils to use extended vocabulary in their speech.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - planning and implementing strategies which give pupils opportunities to become more fully involved in their own, independent learning
  - carrying out sharper assessment of pupils as they learn and adapting activities to meet pupils’ needs.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
---

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. They are polite, bright and cheerful and appreciate the opportunities to work in groups to tackle problems. They adopt healthy lifestyles and a very large proportion participate in sports activities. Around the school, behaviour is very good. In most lessons, the behaviour of the vast majority is impeccable and is a major factor in pupils’ good progress. Pupils are engaged and stimulated when they are given opportunities to be involved in their own learning. This is not consistent. On occasions, where an activity does not challenge or pupils sit passively too long, the pace of the lessons slows, pupils become distracted and the high standards of behaviour wane a little.

Overall, pupils make good progress and attainment is rising. The large majority of children start school with skills that are broadly typical of those expected for their age. Children who entered the school in the last few years have had the benefit of good teaching and learning both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, at the end of which they have attained standards which are above average. Older pupils entered Key Stage 2 with lower standards and their average attainment represents good progress over recent years. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified promptly, supported well and make good progress. Girls and boys both make good progress.

Pupils are proud of, and undertake with maturity, their numerous responsibilities within school. They contribute to the running of the school as members of the School Council, as ‘ECO Warriors’ and as Playground Buddies. They also played an important role in drawing up the ‘Golden Rules’ that point out expectations of good behaviour around the school. Pupils’ good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was seen in their quiet reflection in assemblies, their clear understanding of right and wrong, their good relationships with each other and their appreciation of others’ cultures and traditions.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
--	----------

Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
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
<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>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Good relationships, good subject knowledge and good management of behaviour are strong features of teaching throughout the school. Most lessons are brisk and lively with teachers making good use of well-chosen resources, such as the interactive whiteboard, to promote learning. In the best lessons, teachers used frequent checks and questioning to ensure activities remained finely tuned to pupils' needs as the lesson progressed. As a result, learning was active and rapid. In the small number of lessons where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the pace was slower, teachers spoke too much and pupils were passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.

The imaginative and motivating curriculum has a strong focus on extending pupils' literacy and language development through writing work across a range of subjects. There is less focus on ensuring pupils encounter challenging vocabulary in their reading or when they listen to language, in order to acquire a wider range of words. There are good opportunities to enrich learning through a range of visitors and visits, including a residential visit for Years 5 and 6 to Phasels Wood Scout Camp and Activity Centre. There are very strong partnerships with other schools and organisations, such as Watford Football Club, and St. Clement Danes School, who provide coaching in sports and dance respectively.

Staff provide high levels of supervision for pupils to ensure their safety. Good promotion of attendance by a combination of rewards and an uncompromising attitude towards unauthorised absences has reduced the rate of absence significantly, and attendance is now average. Strong links with the appropriate outside agencies ensure that pupils from the most vulnerable circumstances make good progress in both their academic and personal development. A well-established

<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

tracking system, based securely on the analysis of pupils' learning and progress as seen in lessons and in their books, helps teachers check regularly how pupils are doing and enable support to be directed where needed.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is unrelenting in the drive to provide the best education possible for the pupils. She is ably supported in this by her recently appointed deputy and by the staff. These leaders provide very good examples to their colleagues as professional practitioners both within and outside the classroom. Staff have responded very well to their leadership, and are all going the 'extra mile' in pursuing the best interests of the pupils. A wealth of information has been gathered about pupils' attainment and progress, and this is analysed well to identify patterns in learning and to ensure no group underachieves. Development planning is sharply focused on the results of monitoring and, as a result, outcomes are improving.

Strong and effective links have been formed with other educational establishments, including colleges. A 'school learning' programme has been set up which encourages parents and carers to come to workshops in school in order to find out how their children are learning English and mathematics, so that they can support them more effectively at home and with homework. These, together with the links forged with health and other professionals, are successful in reducing barriers to learning.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body are closely involved in the school and are robust in holding the school to account. They meet their responsibilities effectively, particularly concerning the health and well-being of all pupils and adults. As a result, safeguarding is good.

The school is a cohesive, harmonious community, where pupils have equal opportunities to access all the school offers. The provision for community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has some links with communities abroad, particularly in Colombia, and sound plans to extend pupils' understanding of other people nationally. There are some strong links with the local community, particularly in terms of educational liaison for the pupils. The school is growing in its role as a 'community hub'.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>

### Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress in all areas of learning because of the good provision. Teaching is good with a suitable balance between adult-led and child-led activities that cater well for children’s academic achievement and personal development. Very occasionally, the teaching loses pace, and the children’s minds wander, but this is rare, and the norm of exciting and stimulating lessons and activities is soon re-established. Good use is made of the outdoor area for further learning, especially for raising boys’ attainment in speaking and writing. For example, the construction of a large wooden Spanish galleon, gave much scope for the children to use imaginative vocabulary as they explained the roles and games they were playing aboard the vessel. Children have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy, and are obviously at ease with routines that involve sharing and waiting one’s turn.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The school complies with all the requisite welfare conditions, and pastoral care is very good. Good observational and recording procedures underpin the planning of lessons and activities and contribute well to the increased learning and progress which children are making.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Just more than half of the parental questionnaires were returned. The vast majority of them were very positive. Parents and carers say overwhelmingly that they find staff helpful and supportive, and they appreciate the support given to them by the school. Where children have had some problems, whether academic, developmental or emotional, the vast majority of parents and carers were fulsome in the praise of how the issues were handled by the school. A very small number of questionnaires indicated some parental concerns about communications with the school, but the vast majority praised the school for 'its openness in all matters'. The inspection team found communication with parents to be good.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Maple Cross 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 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 149 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	64	22	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	66	19	31	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	29	48	30	49	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	43	31	51	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	29	48	29	48	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	30	49	29	48	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	56	27	44	0	0	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)	22	36	32	52	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	29	48	31	51	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	38	31	51	4	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	36	32	52	2	3	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	40	66	20	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	38	62	22	36	0	0	1	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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"> <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.**



17 November 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School,  
Rickmansworth, WD3 9SS**

Firstly, may I say what an enjoyable time my colleague and I had when we visited your school. Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work. We especially enjoyed hearing about what you did in the themed weeks, and how much you enjoyed dressing up in different costumes and eating different foods. You obviously enjoy school a lot, and feel very safe and happy there.

You told us you thought the school was good; and we judged it to be good too. Your headteacher and teachers have done much to make your days fun while you are learning, and it is clear that they have good success already, because you are making good progress.

We have asked them to do these things that will help the school improve even more.

- We have asked them to give you more opportunities to learn more exciting vocabulary ('wow' words) to use in your writing.
- We have also asked that the teachers give you more opportunities to learn things by doing them yourselves; we have also asked them to check how you are doing more frequently during lessons, so they can make sure you are learning quickly.

You can help your teachers by thinking hard about the vocabulary you use. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ronald Cohen  
Lead Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**