

Cunningham Hill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117250
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379378
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marie-Claire Scherman
Headteacher	Justine Elbourne-Cload
Date of previous school inspection	19 April 2007
School address	Cell Barnes Lane St Albans AL1 5QJ
Telephone number	01727 852911
Fax number	01727 859255
Email address	admin@cunninghamhill-jun.herts.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
Inspection date(s)	8–9 December 2011
Inspection number	379378

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.

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
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons taught by 11 teachers and held meetings with the headteacher, senior leadership team, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books. The inspectors checked documents, including the school improvement plan, systems for tracking pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation and school policies. They also analysed responses to questionnaires from 143 parents and carers, in addition to those received from staff and pupils.

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

- Do girls make similar progress to boys, particularly in mathematics, and is progress consistent across subjects?
- How effectively do teachers use assessment to re-shape tasks during lessons to ensure pupils, move forward in their learning, especially the most-able pupils?
- What part does the governing body play in school improvement through rigorous monitoring?
- What are the key factors which contribute to the school's successful track record?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average but increasing year on year. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. The percentage who speak English as an additional language is average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The needs of these pupils are mostly related to behaviour and specific learning difficulties. The school has a number of awards, including the Becta ICT Mark, and has achieved national Healthy Schools status.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Cunningham Hill Junior provides an outstanding education for its pupils. It is led by an exceptional headteacher who is extremely well supported by two assistant headteachers and a team of very talented and hard-working teachers. They all share a common vision and are passionate about their school. Their excellent teamwork ensures that all pupils are able to maximise their life chances. One of the key features contributing to the success of the school is the high quality of the teaching. Teachers are extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. They capture pupils' imaginations and are skilled at transporting them into exciting new worlds. This was exemplified in an art lesson through which excited pupils in Year 6 explored the mind and imagery of Picasso. Pupils show high levels of interest and excitement, are keen to answer questions and share their thinking with each other and their teachers. This is supported extremely well by all teachers, who use their highly effective questioning skills to clarify, challenge and extend pupils' thinking or further develop their ideas.

Pupils say they feel safe. This is because, as one pupil said, 'there are sensible rules and everyone behaves really well.' They understand potentially unsafe situations and how to deal with them. For example, they speak confidently about how to keep themselves safe near water, on the roadside and how to deal with interactions on the internet. The care, support and guidance provided by the school are excellent and promote independence and achievement. Pupils are very polite and considerate. They greet visitors with a smile and readily welcome them to their school with pride. Their behaviour is exemplary in and around the school. This makes a strong contribution to the progress pupils make in lessons. Achievement is outstanding. Pupils make outstanding gains in their learning in a very short space of time. Throughout the school progress accelerates and is very impressive; pupils meet and exceed highly challenging targets. The excellent curriculum contributes very well to pupils' personal development. For example, pupils are encouraged to enter a variety of competitions to enrich their learning such as the National Mathematics Challenge for secondary schools in which they have gained awards at gold, silver and bronze level.

The senior leadership team know the school exceedingly well. Self-evaluation is accurate and searching. Procedures are extremely thorough and ensure an unrelenting focus on achievement and a drive for excellence at all levels. Teachers are supported and coached very effectively, and become increasingly confident. Teaching assistants contribute well to classroom practice because they are well

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

directed. Areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection have been successfully tackled. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged to achieve as well as they can in the vast majority of lessons. Links with the neighbouring infant school have strengthened considerably, ensuring that pupils make a smooth transition to the junior school. No learning time is lost. Attendance is high, reflecting how much pupils enjoy coming to school. Much teaching is outstanding but the school is never complacent and focuses attention on improving good teaching and making it even better. Its successes indicate that the school has outstanding capacity for further improvement. The governing body contributes well to the life of the school and holds the school to account for its performance. Its members offer support and challenge to staff. However, they do not always monitor closely enough the impact of the school's actions to bring about improvement.

The school has developed many links with a variety of organisations which benefit pupils' learning. This ensures they are prepared well for the next stage in their education. Along with their high level of basic skills, pupils are prepared outstandingly well for their future lives.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move all elements of the school to outstanding, building on the work already started, by:
 - supporting teachers to implement individual areas for improvement from lesson observations
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of different cultures from their own
 - training governors to monitor the impact of the school's work more systematically.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils enter the school with generally above-average levels of attainment, although this fluctuates a little from year-to-year. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6 they reach high levels of attainment and a large proportion gain the highest level in national tests. Their progress is outstanding. No groups of pupils underachieve, and girls and boys achieve equally well. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make huge gains in their learning and reach the challenging targets set for them. Pupils develop confidence in their learning because teaching is inspirational and relationships are valued. They look up to their teachers who act as excellent role models. Pupils develop independence because teachers provide opportunities for them to think for themselves and solve their own problems. In an excellent mathematics lesson in Year 6, pupils tussled with problems about percentages, fractions and decimals. They challenged themselves well by choosing appropriate questions matched to their abilities. Pupils voice their opinions well. In an excellent Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils were involved in role play about the Victorians. They learnt about Victorian dialogue and were able to speak eloquently

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

about the life and times of the people.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Most recognise that exercise and fitness activities help them to relax and develop their emotional well-being. Nearly all take up activities which keep them fit. The acquisition of Healthy School status demonstrates the school’s commitment to developing pupils’ healthy lifestyles. Pupils work tirelessly in the locality, for example by working with senior citizens in their ‘Sharing Stories’ group and entertaining members of the local community at Christmas time. Pupils see these times as opportunities to act as ‘ambassadors for the school’. Older pupils wrote to the town council and then worked with the council to make their local park safer by removing debris and unsafe play equipment. ‘Young leaders’ in Year 6 are trained to support younger children in the school and in the nearby infant school. They support the infants with ‘golden time’ every Friday and run an Infant Lego Club. Pupils’ contribution to the community is excellent. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. While there are outstanding elements in most aspects, pupils’ cultural understanding is less well developed.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teachers plan stimulating, high-quality lessons which pupils thoroughly enjoy. Pupils are engaged and interested in the wide range of activities regularly offered to them in the vast majority of lessons. Teachers are highly skilled in the use of electronic whiteboards to enhance and

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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

enliven learning. In addition, their expertise in the use of other technology is exemplary. In an outstanding lesson in information and communication technology (ICT), pupils were able to reach exceptionally high levels of attainment and develop their skills extremely well. This was because the teacher’s subject knowledge was thorough and secure. Pupils made their own animations and then busily set to work making their ‘voice overs’. The end product was excellent and, as a result, pupils broke into spontaneous applause. The Becta ICT mark demonstrates teachers’ high technical abilities. Teachers’ oral feedback to pupils while they work ensures they are challenged to reach the highest levels of attainment. Written feedback provides clear hints and tips about how to improve their work next time. Teaching assistants are very active and support the learning of pupils most effectively. This is because teachers take the time to brief them properly so that they know what is expected in lessons. This helps all pupils to achieve and contributes much to their success.

The curriculum is outstanding because it ensures that there are many opportunities to experience high-quality learning, both in and out of lessons. Almost all pupils attend at least one of the high number of extra-curricular clubs on offer. These cover many sports, music, theatre and art and a range of other activities. All pupils are provided with the chance to excel and to experience something new. Outside groups provide additional opportunities to enrich pupils’ learning and imaginative themed days and weeks create further memorable experiences. The school has forged strong links with other educational establishments which has resulted in further enrichment.

Exceptional personal outcomes for pupils are underpinned by the outstanding care, support and guidance afforded by the school. Behaviour is exemplary at all times because expectations are made very clear. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and show genuine concern if their friends, or any other pupils, are encountering difficulties. They are mature young people. Safety and welfare are of prime importance to all staff. Academic progress is meticulously tracked to ensure any sign of emerging underachievement is tackled vigorously.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are exemplary at all levels. Newly qualified teachers acquire high levels of expertise rapidly because all around them they have excellent role models. Monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders are meticulous. Assessment data are used highly effectively to pinpoint pupils who require extra input to make

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

accelerated progress. The school clearly knows what it should do to improve further and has excellent plans in place to ensure its continual development. Pupils’ achievement is the school’s first concern. Development plans are of high quality and are regularly reviewed, demonstrating a reflective approach to planning. Governance is good and the governing body knows what the performance data show about the school. They are developing a clearer understanding of the school’s strengths and areas of relative weakness but realise that their monitoring role requires further development.

Community cohesion is promoted well and the work of the school is beginning to focus on developing pupils’ comprehension of life in multi-cultural Britain. Parents and carers are engaged highly effectively in the work of the school through a variety of workshops and other events. Excellent teaching ensures that any gaps between groups of pupils narrows swiftly, promoting equal opportunity for all. Discrimination is tackled very well and not tolerated. Safeguarding requirements are all in place and staff are well trained in matters of child protection. Checks on adults who work in the school are carried out regularly and rigorously. The school works extremely well with key agencies.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Over half the parents and carers returned the questionnaires and almost all of these were extremely positive about the school. The overwhelming majority were in agreement with many of the statements posed on the questionnaire, and consequently the level of disagreement was extremely low. A high proportion of parents and carers made additional comments. A few feel that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively. Inspectors found behaviour and its

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

management to be outstanding. A few parents and carers felt that their views and concerns were not taken into account well enough. This was brought to the attention of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cunningham Hill Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 237 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	64	49	34	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	110	77	33	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	62	43	70	49	8	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	63	44	73	51	5	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	87	61	53	37	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	71	50	66	46	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	75	52	66	46	2	1	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)	71	50	62	43	2	1	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	74	52	60	42	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	68	48	62	43	1	1	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	38	75	52	4	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	91	64	44	31	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	93	65	46	32	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	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).

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"> ■ 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.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cunningham Hill Junior School, St Albans, AL1 5QJ

Thank you very much for making our recent visit to your school such a memorable one. We were extremely impressed by how well you behaved and how polite and courteous you were. You told us about the many things you take responsibility for, such as looking after younger pupils in the infant school. This is highly commendable.

You are clearly proud of your school and enjoy attending. We were also very pleased with the results you achieve in national tests and the amount of progress you make. We enjoyed watching you learn very much. You were a real whizz with the computers. Those of you who made animations and put the voices to them really enjoyed yourselves. You were able to participate in such an exciting lesson because your teachers spend time planning excellent learning opportunities and they have high expectations of what you can achieve.

Your headteacher and the assistant headteachers do a superb job. They want the very best for you all. That is why we think your school is outstanding; that means it is brilliant in many ways. It has made excellent improvements since the inspectors came the last time. Even outstanding schools have some things they should improve upon. We have asked your school to help the governing body to really check out the school's work more closely and to know whether what the school is doing is working. We have also asked the headteacher to continue what she is doing to help individual teachers make all their lessons outstanding. Finally, we have asked that the school provides you with more opportunities to develop your understanding of different cultures. You can help too by always doing your best.

Once again, it was a pleasure to visit your school and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat
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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**