

John Hellins Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121851
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380338
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2012
Lead inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Millidge
Headteacher	Michele Bramble
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2007
School address	Brownwood Drive Potterspurty Towcester NN12 7PG
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited two assemblies and eight lessons, observing six teachers. The inspector heard some pupils in Years 2 and 6 read. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection; he observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. Seventy questionnaires completed by parents and carers were analysed, together with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

John Hellins Primary School is considerably smaller than most schools of its type. The vast majority of the pupils are of White British origin. Others come from different minority ethnic heritages. None speak English as an additional language. There is no predominant minority ethnic group. Very few pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual starting or finishing times. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at 'school action plus' or have a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average for primary schools. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Senior leaders and most of the teaching staff have been appointed since the last inspection. During this inspection extensive building work was being undertaken at the school.

The school shares the site with a privately run pre-school. It was inspected separately.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It has moved forward since the last inspection and has the capacity to improve further. It is not outstanding because the quality of teaching is not consistently high enough to ensure high attainment in writing, and assessment procedures are not sufficiently well embedded.
- Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is well above average in reading and mathematics, and above average in writing. Pupils' progress in writing is slower than in reading and mathematics because staff do not always demand enough from the pupils, particularly those who are more able, and they have insufficient opportunities to write at length or to consolidate their writing skills in different subjects.
- Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety. They are consistently well behaved and most have a positive attitude to learning. Their attendance is above average.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils in most year groups are making good progress. However, it is inconsistent in lower Key Stage 2, where on occasion pupils are passive learners and the pace of lessons is too slow. Most teachers use assessment information well to plan work that closely matches the pupils' needs. Marking is informative and routinely offers pupils clear guidance to improve their work. However, not all assessments are accurate and some teachers do not consistently make clear their expectations to ensure that pupils of differing abilities are challenged.
- Good leadership and management by the governing body and senior leaders and an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development have underpinned improvements. Information from improved assessment procedures is being used increasingly effectively to improve the quality of teaching and to raise standards. A clear vision for the development of the school includes capitalising on the current building work.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing, across the school by:
 - making certain that pupils consolidate and extend their writing skills across the curriculum and are provided with more opportunities to write at length
 - ensuring that the expectations of pupils with different abilities are made clear in all lessons.
- Address the inconsistencies in pupils' progress, especially in lower Key Stage 2, by ensuring that in all lessons:
 - pupils are encouraged to make a greater contribution to their own learning
 - learning proceeds at a quick pace.
- Consolidate and refine assessment procedures to ensure that assessments are accurate and used effectively to raise expectations for all pupils, particularly those who are more able.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' good achievement in developing their key skills is appreciated by nearly all the parents and carers who returned questionnaires. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress in all areas of learning. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is typically above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 it is well above average in reading and mathematics, but more could reasonably be expected of most pupils, particularly the more able, in writing. Lesson observations and scrutiny of assessment data and pupils' work show that most pupils are making good progress. Different groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make similar progress to their peers.

Reading is promoted well throughout the school. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and most pupils have a good understanding of the different ways to read unfamiliar words. Home/school books and the ongoing support from parents and carers ensure the work in school is consolidated at home. Success in mathematics is ensured through the emphasis placed on ensuring that the pupils have the opportunities to investigate mathematical concepts in practical and real-life situations, and a sharp focus on developing the

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understanding and use of mathematical terminology. For example, in one class pupils studied travel brochures to check for costs and best value. In another, pupils visited a supermarket website to check the prices of different items so that they could work out the total cost of their shopping. Pupils responded well to these challenges as they could see the relevance to everyday life.

Pupils' progress in writing is not as rapid because they are not routinely asked to write at length or for a wide range of different purposes through reviewing a book, creating a storybook for younger pupils or formulating an alternative ending for the story they are reading, for example. Pupils are not always reminded of their literacy targets when writing in other subjects. Consequently, they are not challenged sufficiently, and their writing skills are not consolidated and extended.

Quality of teaching

Teachers strive to make lessons interesting and capture the imagination of the pupils. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson the classroom was transformed into the 'eccentric professor's science laboratory'. The teacher donned a big curly black wig and a white technician's coat and became the scientist. He was supported effectively by adult helpers, who entered into the spirit of the lesson. Pupils engaged wholeheartedly and were fully involved in group research. In all lessons teachers share the learning objective with pupils and clearly identify criteria by which learning can be evaluated. The vast majority of lessons proceed at a quick pace and teachers use questioning strategies effectively. Most teachers make effective use of information and communication technology to enhance lessons. For example, in one class animation was used well to enable pupils to consider a range of strategies to adopt when putting together a persuasive argument. Most teachers make good use of opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion with a talk-partner and so develop their linguistic and social skills.

Just occasionally, particularly in Lower Key Stage 2, teacher talk dominates a lesson, the pace is slow and pupils do not make a sufficient contribution to discussions or to their own learning. There is a lack of clarity in the teacher's explanations. Expectations of pupils with different abilities are not made clear. For example in an English lesson, all pupils were working to the same aims and success criteria, with no challenging objectives for the different ability groups. In some classes, the work in pupils' books suggests that teachers do not encourage enough use of adjectives, alliteration, similes and metaphors in their writing, and they do not routinely use a dictionary to check their spelling or a thesaurus to find alternative words.

Teachers are developing their skills in assessing pupils' work and using the information effectively to enhance learning. However, in some cases, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, assessments are over-cautious; in some they are too generous. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and some pupils are encouraged to mark and evaluate their own work. Teachers make good use of praise and provide helpful next-step comments to help pupils make progress toward their literacy and numeracy targets, but do not routinely revisit earlier comments to ensure that pupils

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have understood and responded to the advice.

Adult support is usually deployed well to help individuals and small groups. This particularly benefits disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, but also helps to develop and promote all pupils' reading and mathematical skills.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. This is reflected in the pupils' ability to get on well together and their good behaviour. All pupils sang enthusiastically as they listened to and watched the Jubilee video 'Sing'. The clips from around the world successfully promoted the pupils' awareness of other cultures.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are keen to learn and some want to come to school even when they are unwell. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They show respect for each other, staff and visitors alike. Pupils confirm that incidents of inappropriate behaviour such as fighting, and different sorts of bullying such as name-calling, are rare. They say that if an incident occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and fairly by staff. There have been no reported racist incidents since the last inspection.

Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety and know who to approach if they are worried or concerned. This was evident in their comments about avoiding accidents during the ongoing building work at the school and when using the internet. Comments included, 'You must be careful where you go around school in case things fall on you. It should be OK because there is fencing,' and, 'When you use the internet you must not tell others things about yourself because you don't know who they are.' The school and Eco councils are proactive in helping to move the school forward and offer suggestions for its development. Pupils view the size of the school as an advantage, saying, 'We all know each other well and there is always someone to talk to and play with.'

Most parents and carers believe that pupils are kept safe and that behaviour is good. A small number raised concerns about behaviour and bullying. The inspector found no evidence to corroborate these concerns.

Leadership and management

The effective governing body has successfully managed significant major changes in the school's staffing, including that of headteacher and deputy headteacher. It has ensured standards have been maintained, pupils are kept safe, and the latest government requirements on safeguarding are fully met. It also ensures good equality of opportunity and the avoidance of discrimination through close, regular monitoring of school data. Members of the governing body are aware of the relative weakness in writing and the inconsistent progress of some pupils. They are monitoring the situation closely and regularly seek updates from the headteacher. The governing body has also been successful in securing the much-needed additional

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classroom and the remodelling of the existing building.

Senior leaders know the school well. The school development plan is detailed and based on a secure evaluation of the school's performance. The priorities for improvement are appropriate and closely linked to raising attainment and accelerating pupils' progress. Staff are working effectively as a team and have responded well to initiatives to drive their professional development forward. They have adopted many changes following the creation of an additional class. They have reviewed the coverage of the curriculum and ensured all national requirements are included in the two-year rolling topics programme. Staff now look more critically at the quality and accuracy of their assessment of pupils' work and have responded positively to challenges from the headteacher, although their judgements are not yet consistently accurate. Middle leaders are developing their expertise well and support senior leaders effectively.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes pupils' learning, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, well. It is enhanced by a suitable range of after-school activities, visits and visitors to the school. Relationships with parents and carers are good. They are supportive and appreciate the improvements made over the last few years. Links with the on-site pre-school are well established. The school's effective systems and structures, clear vision for development and progress made since the last inspection demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve further.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



25 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Hellins Primary School, Towcester, NN12 7PG

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school, and for completing the questionnaire. I enjoyed my visit and talking to you. A special thank you to the orchestra - your music was a pleasure to listen to, and started the day off well. In our discussions, you told us that you enjoy school and feel safe because the staff look after you. You know that you can turn to them if you are worried. Your behaviour is good and you show a positive attitude towards learning. Your attendance is above the average for primary schools. Well done – keep it up!

Your school provides you with a good education. By the end of Year 6, your attainment is well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. This represents good progress and achievement during your time at the school.

I have asked the school to help you to make even better progress and reach higher standards, especially in writing, by making certain that:

- you practise your writing skills in other lessons and you have more opportunities to write at length
- all teachers assess your work correctly, use the results to make lesson activities consistently challenging, and make clear in each lesson what is expected of pupils working at different levels
- you are all making good progress, especially in lower Key Stage 2.

Please remember that to make your school better, you must always try your best.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones
Lead inspector

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