

Knowsley Junior School

Stoneleigh Road, Springhead, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL4 4BH

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From their starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. At the end of Year 6, an above average proportion of pupils reach the nationally expected levels of attainment in mathematics, writing and reading.
- Standards have risen since the previous inspection, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations for all pupils and provide motivating, well-planned lessons.
- Pupils behave well and are happy. Pupils relish the many opportunities to hold positions of responsibility and leadership.
- Pupils are eager to learn and show positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their above average attendance and excellent punctuality.
- The highly dedicated acting headteacher and senior leaders are improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Pupils' achievement in English grammar, punctuation and spelling, extended writing and the teaching of pupils for whom English is not their first language have all strengthened.
- Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They effectively hold the school to account so that the school's effectiveness continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress or better in writing is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils do not always have enough time to deepen and extend their knowledge and skills in lessons.
- Pupils do not always reflect well enough on the detailed marking of their work and as a result, do not always learn from their mistakes.
- Leaders do not always make the best use of data showing how well pupils are doing in order to provide targeted support quickly for individuals and groups of pupils, especially to ensure that achievement in writing improves.
- Plans for action to raise pupils' achievement do not always indicate precise ways in which school leaders can measure success.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or part-lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors observed a number of teaching assistants working with pupils in and out of lessons. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime and listened to a sample of Years 3 and 4 pupils read.
- The inspectors held discussions with pupils from all year groups, members of the governing body, the headteacher, other school leaders, members of staff, a representative of the local authority and a number of parents.
- The responses to 32 staff questionnaires, 25 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the analysis of the most school's recent survey of parents of pupils in Year 3 were taken into account.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a wide range of documents. Documents included the school's self-evaluation and development plan and those relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors reviewed the standards pupils reach over time and those predicted for the end of this academic year.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work that pupils have completed in their books, examined external moderators' reports of assessment of pupils' abilities, documents relating to how well the performance of teachers is managed and minutes of the meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Fiona Dixon, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Batty	Additional Inspector
Clare Henderson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Knowsley Junior School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is lower than average, although it is steadily rising. The pupil premium is additional funding allocated for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs has steadily risen since the previous inspection and is now average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and for who English is not their first language has risen and is now broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school holds a number of awards including the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award, Healthy School award, Tooth Friendly School award and it is an Eco-School.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several staff changes. When the previous headteacher retired in August 2013, the present acting headteacher was appointed. At present, consultations to amalgamate the school with Springhead Infant School are taking place.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching to further raise pupils' achievement, especially in writing, by:
 - allowing pupils to reflect consistently on the detailed marking of their work so they can learn from their mistakes and move their learning forward more rapidly
 - providing more timely opportunities for the most-able pupils to extend and deepen their knowledge and skills in all lessons
 - making better use of existing high-calibre teaching in the school to exemplify to other teachers and teaching assistants the wide range of learning activities that enable pupils to make rapid progress.
- Further strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
 - continuing to develop leaders' use of data showing assessments of pupils' achievement to provide even more prompt and targeted support for individuals and groups of pupils to accelerate their progress further, especially in writing
 - making sure that all action plans have realistic and measurable targets which will enable pupil progress to be identified clearly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. In the national assessments and tests in Year 6 in 2013, an above average proportion of pupils attained the nationally expected Level 4 in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Although an average proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 5 in mathematics and reading, the proportions reaching this higher level in writing were lower. School data and inspection evidence indicate that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to improve these standards even further, with more on track to reach the higher Level 5 or better, including in writing. This shows that the most-able pupils achieve well overall.
- In Year 6 in 2013, the proportion of pupils making expected progress through Key Stage 2 was above average in reading and mathematics, but slightly below average in writing. Pupils' starting points are comprehensively and systematically checked on entry to Year 3. School data and inspection evidence show that currently, across the year groups, the proportion of pupils making expected progress, and the proportion doing better than this, is above average in reading and mathematics. Achievement in writing, although good overall, is still not as strong.
- Leaders are now focussing strongly on improving achievement in writing. Pupils now have more opportunities to write at length in different subjects. More focused support for pupils who are not yet making good progress have also been put into place. Inspection evidence shows this is beginning to help pupils' achievement in writing to speed up. Even so, these developments have not yet had enough time to show improvements in national tests and assessments.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. Good teaching ensures that pupils can read fluently both to themselves and aloud. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read with understanding and use inference well. Many pupils read for pleasure in the school library at lunchtime and at home.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium achieve well. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than that of similar pupils in other schools. In Year 6 in 2013, their attainment was about two terms behind that of their classmates in writing and mathematics and one term behind in reading. Their progress has accelerated further this year and the gap is now much narrower.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points. The support they receive closely matches their needs. They make particularly good progress in reading; all pupils achieve at least Level 4 by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Teachers have recently improved their skills so that they meet the needs of this growing group of pupils more effectively. This is helping to raise their achievement, including pupils for whom English is not their first language, who achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, their classmates do. This shows that the school promotes equality of opportunity and effectively tackles all discrimination.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good with some examples of excellent teaching; this helps pupils to make good progress.
- Lessons are well-planned and offer a wide variety of learning opportunities. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson on probability, pupils enjoyed using spinners and dominoes to investigate possible answers. Pupils worked well in groups, showing well-developed skills in listening, turn-taking and the use of mathematical vocabulary to explore and explain their findings.
- Teachers make good use of the information on how well pupils are learning to ensure that good progress is made in lessons. In a Year 4 geography lesson, the teacher skilfully paired pupils so those who were more confident worked without direct adult support to find the continents of the world in an atlas, while other pupils were effectively supported by the teacher and teaching assistant.

- Occasionally, the most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they are able to. When they remain working on an activity that they can already do for too long, opportunities to move their learning forward at a faster pace are missed.
- Some teaching is outstanding and so all pupils, including the most able, make rapid progress. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson on the use of partitioning to multiply, the most-able pupils were quickly moved on to more challenging work. Outstanding aspects to teaching that lead to excellent progress are not yet used to model high calibre teaching to others to raise the quality of teaching even further.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good and enables pupils to achieve well across the curriculum subjects. In a Year 6 science lesson, pupils actively discussed the adaptation of the camel for survival in a desert before applying these skills to create their own creature, explaining both verbally and in writing the adaptations necessary to allow the animal to thrive. Numeracy is regularly used in topic work as seen in the study of Victorian methods of calculation.
- A love of reading is developed through the 'book club' approach to sharing the pleasures of reading and through the detailed study of different types of writing. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils discussed the nature of poetry. One pupil said 'a poem is a cross between a story and a sentence', showing the pupil has used their previous learning to help explain their understanding of poetry.
- Achievement in writing has improved. New approaches to teaching are helping to ensure that pupils do not have any gaps in their skills and knowledge and is working well throughout the school. Pupils are now more confident to use their grammatical skills in their every day writing. Opportunities for writing at length are now more frequent and better suited to pupils' needs.
- Pupils' work is always marked in detail. Teachers make it crystal clear what pupils need to do to learn from their mistakes in order to make more progress. However, pupils are not always given the time needed to go back to their work and respond to teachers' advice. This slows learning.
- Pupils' learning is supported well by teaching assistants in and out of the classroom. Teaching assistants enhance pupils' learning by leading highly focused support sessions that accelerate progress, including for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those supported through the pupil premium.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have a positive attitude towards their learning and freely show respect to each other and all adults. Pupils are very welcoming and interested in visitors, showing excellent manners and enthusiastically talking about their school life and learning.
- Pupils take pride in wearing their uniform. Midday supervisors commented on pupils' consistently respectful behaviour in the dining halls.
- Pupils keep their school neat and tidy. Eco-warriors in Year 6 are always on the watch for items that can be recycled or lights that can be switched off.
- Pupils enjoy responsibility and eagerly apply to become sports leaders, school councillors, eco-warriors and house captains. Pupils run their own healthy snack shop, assist in the running of the school library and represent the school in many sporting events.
- Pupils care about each other a good deal. The school council is eager to purchase more play equipment but know that it 'must be safe' and appropriate for the playground.
- Pupils play well together outside and inside. Many pupils in Year 3 enjoy the organised activities led by the Year 6 sports leaders at lunchtime and say 'it is fun to exercise.'
- In class, pupils are almost always eager to learn. Occasionally, some pupils chatter or do not pull their weight in a task, leaving others in the group to do the work.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught well about different types of bullying, like cyber-bullying, and say that it is rare. Pupils feel very safe and know what to do if there is a problem. Pupils value the 'Rights Respecting Charter'. They say that it gives them the confidence that any problem will be dealt with in a consistent and fair manner.

- Attendance is above average and punctuality is excellent.

The leadership and management are good

- Recent changes to leadership have had a positive impact on accelerating the pace of improvement across the school. The acting headteacher is inspiring and dedicated to moving the school forward. She has enlisted the full support of staff and morale is high.
- A sharper focus is now placed on checking pupils' progress and putting into place well-targeted support for individuals and groups. This is helping to ensure that any previous gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge are filled effectively so that pupils can make good progress. Although these improvements have not yet gone on for long enough to show in results in national tests and assessments, inspection evidence shows that this support is increasing pupils' progress even further, especially in writing.
- Subject and middle leaders have received extensive training and are fully responsible for leading improvements in their areas. Middle leaders effectively check the quality of teaching and use their findings to plan further improvements to teaching.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Leaders continually provide teachers and teaching assistants the opportunity to learn new skills to make sure that pupils are taught well. Recent training has improved the teaching of English grammar, punctuation and spelling and extended writing. Teachers have also learnt many new ways of meeting the needs of growing proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language. This has resulted in their continued good progress.
- The performance of teaching is rigorously checked and effective support is given to improve further. Teachers are acutely aware that they are accountable for their pupils' progress and that their performance is linked to salary progression.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' achievement is assessed regularly and their progress is carefully tracked. This is why, for example, they are now focussing strongly on improving achievement in writing. However, they do not yet always make the most of this information to ensure that targeted support for individuals and groups of pupils is established quickly, such as in writing.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. Clear actions plans to raise achievement further are in place. However, it is not always clear the precise ways in which leaders intend to measure the success of their actions because plans do not always have realistic and measurable targets.
- Social, moral, spiritual and cultural learning is outstanding. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they have to take on positions of responsibility and make a difference to their school as seen in the school council's purchase of a friendship stop in the school gazebo. All pupils proudly produce a piece of art for the bi-annual art exhibition open to the local community and support national and international charities.
- The topic-based curriculum inspires pupils' interests and improves their skills at a good rate. Themed events, such as the 'enterprise' week, introduce all pupils to the world of work and commerce. Visitors from local companies work alongside pupils, sharing their expertise and helping pupils develop their own 'mini companies', including selling items such as chocolate-covered strawberries.
- The primary school sport funding is used well to further increase pupils' opportunities to participate in sport. The funding supports specialist coaches who work alongside teachers to increase their skills. They also provide a wide range of competitive sports, including dodge ball, and have enabled a greater participation in local tournaments and national competitions.
- Parents are happy with the school and regularly attend class assemblies, coffee mornings and visit their children in classrooms. One parent said that their child 'has come on in leaps and bounds'.
- The local authority has provided support to manage the changing profile of pupils, especially to meet the needs of pupils for whom English is not their first language. They agree this is a good school.
- **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school’s strengths and weaknesses. Governors are regular visitors to the school and freely share their expertise, working with pupils and checking the quality of teaching and learning.
- A sub-committee regularly scrutinises the school’s performance data. This allows governors to ask challenging questions of the headteacher, and in turn influences decisions on how best to allocate school funds, such as funding additional teaching staff in Year 3 and teaching assistants to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium. Pupil premium and primary school sports funding are monitored closely and the impact of spending on pupils’ achievement is evaluated fully. The performance management for teaching staff and the headteacher are carried out rigorously. All statutory duties are met. The governing body is keen that the school prepares the pupils for life in modern Britain and actively supports the extensive extra-curricular, charitable and community activities undertaken by the school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105670
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	440728

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	354
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Heffernan
Headteacher	Vanessa Payne
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2011
Telephone number	0161 6334433
Fax number	0161 6334433
Email address	info@knowsley.oldham.sch.uk

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