

# Hunsdon Junior Mixed and Infant School

High Street, Ware, SG12 8NT

**Inspection dates** 24–25 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Reception children settle quickly and make good progress. They are taught well and are eager to learn.
- Standards in English and mathematics are above average. By the end of Year 6, nearly all pupils reach the expected level for 11-year-olds and many exceed it.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make particularly rapid progress in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well and close the gap between themselves and other pupils.
- Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Pupils say they try hard in their lessons because teachers motivate them to learn.
- Good use is made of the expertise of individual members of staff to promote pupils' learning.
- Teachers stimulate pupils' interest by linking different subjects together in memorable ways.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because it is reinforced in the everyday life of the school.
- Systems to check how pupils are progressing over time are effective.
- Pupils appreciate the very wide range of clubs, and that they can pursue their interests in them.
- Parents strongly agree that their children are happy and safe at school.
- The school has been well led and managed since the previous inspection so pupils have thrived.
- Governors have prioritised building an effective staff team and work closely with the headteacher to further improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement is good rather than outstanding because the quality of pupils' learning and their rates of progress are good but not exceptional.
- The investment in smaller classes, for the younger pupils, has not yet resulted in the most able pupils, being consistently stretched so that they achieve highly.
- Although pupils achieve well, school improvement planning is not challenging enough or sufficiently clear about what needs to be done for the school to be outstanding.
- When teachers explain the main points of the lesson, they do not always adequately check pupils' understanding.

### Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, all with the headteacher.
- The inspector also looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils reading.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 17 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and associated text comments and other parental views. The responses to 15 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of its own performance; records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from the pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; governing body minutes and documents relating to safeguarding.

### Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Reception children and those in Years 1 and 2 are taught in single year groups. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught together, as are those in Years 5 and 6.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported through a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (the extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics when they leave primary school.
- The new headteacher took up his post in September 2014, having taught at the school for the previous seven years.
- An independent pre-school shares the site. It is separately inspected.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the quality of learning is consistently good and progress is exceptional by making sure that teachers:
  - check that pupils fully understand their explanations
  - better match activities to the prior learning of the most able pupils so that they always make the rapid progress of which they are capable
  - capitalise fully on the smaller teaching groups in the younger years so that all pupils, and particularly the most able, make rapid progress.
- Improve planning for school improvement so that it is challenging and clearly sets out what is to be done, how change will be achieved and how success will be measured.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The school largely succeeds in its stated aim to be: 'A happy school with a caring ethos'. Governors stress that pupils' well-being is fundamental to the school, so they can thrive and flourish.
- Teaching is well led. Regular monitoring clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement, and teachers are given support where it is needed. As a result, teachers 'fine tune' their skills and increase their effectiveness.
- All staff benefit from regular conversations with the headteacher to manage their performance and clarify how the school can help them to improve.
- Information about pupils' progress is used effectively, particularly to check that no pupil is falling behind and, if they are, to put extra help in place.
- The school is working closely with other schools and the local authority to develop a new approach to assessment while, in the meantime, continuing with the system that has worked well.
- Subject and other leaders are effective because they have responsibilities closely matched to their qualifications and expertise.
- The headteacher, in his previous role as subject leader, effectively led improvement in mathematics and results in recent years have been consistently above average, with some pupils reaching the highest level. He has now put into place a similar approach to raise reading standards so that pupils can aspire to reaching the highest levels. However, the school improvement plan is not challenging enough and does not clearly state exactly what is to be done, how change will be achieved and how success will be measured.
- The curriculum is very clearly defined so that the National Curriculum is fully covered but in the 'Hunsdon way'. All pupils study the same broad subject, but are given the scope to pursue areas of particular interest in order to extend their knowledge. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy coming together in an exciting range of activities as part of a culmination 'event'. For example, the theme of 'Multicultural Britain' ended with a 'Carnival Day' celebrating the pupils' work about a range of cultures. Their vivid memories show how effectively this deepens their understanding.
- Pupils particularly enjoy the wide range of clubs offered, and the opportunity for older pupils to start and run their own in areas that interest them. For example, pupils have organised a philosophy club.
- Additional sports funding is used very effectively. In a school where sport already enjoyed a high priority, it has led to further improvement. Pupils particularly enjoy new activities, such as rugby. One pupil said, 'Before trying it at school, I never really got into cricket, but now I'm joining the local cricket club.' All pupils recognise the importance to their well-being of physical activity. 'It keeps you healthy', 'It teaches you new skills' and 'It helps your teamwork and leadership skills' were some of their comments. Staff identified areas in which they wanted training and have benefited from working alongside specialists.
- Partnership with parents is outstanding. All parents responding to the questionnaire would recommend the school. All those leaving comments described the school very positively: 'A truly wonderful and unique school,' and 'I don't believe my children could have had a better start in life,' were typical views.
- The school works well with other local schools, both to share staff expertise and to offer extra activities to pupils, including opportunities to use specialist equipment at the high school.

- The local authority supports the school well and the specific advice and guidance given to the newly appointed headteacher is much appreciated.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is effective. Governors have rightly prioritised recruiting and retaining high-quality staff, and supporting their professional development. This is reflected in the standards pupils achieve. Governors know the school very well and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, the role of performance management and how pay is linked to performance. Governors have a good grasp of information about how pupils are progressing, how additional pupil premium and sports funds are spent, and how these are making a difference. Finances are carefully controlled so that they are able to keep pupil numbers to 15 in each of the three classes for the youngest pupils. However, they have not yet checked that this is making any significant difference to the rate of pupils' progress. They use information they are given and their own regular monitoring to support the school and hold staff to account. Although they are kept abreast of developments through the headteacher's report, the school improvement plan does not provide governors with clear criteria against which they can measure success. They are shortly to join the staff in long-term planning, including how British values will be promoted. Governors carry out their legal duties effectively, including those related to safeguarding.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is because they conform to expectations, and understand the importance of rules in a community. The school works closely with parents of pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour so that boundaries are set at home as in school, and consistently applied. There have been no exclusions.
- The school has clearly articulated what it wants from its pupils. 'Try your best and the teachers are happy,' they say. They understand the importance of 'having a go' and persevering.
- Pupils' positive attitudes play an important part in their own learning. They demonstrate a strong work ethic and are responsive to adults. Classrooms are a hive of activity.
- Pupils help one another in class and listen closely to any problem their partner faces in their work and make very thoughtful suggestions that often lead to improvement. By the time they are in the older year groups, they recognise the importance and benefits of teamwork.
- Pupils take pride in their work, both in content and presentation. They look after their school and its equipment well.
- Older pupils say they particularly enjoy working with those younger than themselves; for example, in the activities at the end of each topic. It says much of their commitment to the school community that one of their rewards for good behaviour is extra opportunities to do this.
- Personal development is embedded in everything the school does. Pupils say, for example, that the regular drama productions develop their self-confidence.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils understand how to stay safe when using the internet. All parents responding to the questionnaire agreed their children felt safe in school and strongly agreed that their children are well looked after.
- Attendance is above average and punctuality is good for all groups. Pupils say they enjoy school and look forward to lessons.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' different backgrounds are celebrated and an understanding of everyone's rights and responsibilities in the school community is well established. The school has responded well to the recommendation of the previous inspection that it develops ties with schools in contrasting areas. For example, pupils' good links with schools in Africa and India help them

gain an appreciation of life in other parts of the world.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- All staff know their pupils well and the positive relationships between them enable lessons to flow smoothly and learning to take place at a good rate.
- Excellent use is made of staff expertise. For example, the school is alive with artwork created using a wide range of techniques and styles.
- Basic literacy and numeracy skills are well taught and pupils learn well. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are generally taught in short instruction sessions and then practised in writing in other subjects, so that pupils can consolidate their new knowledge and skills.
- Pupils say they find it particularly helpful that their teachers give them the criteria by which their work will be marked, before they start the task. This helps them to focus their thinking and to make sure that they include everything they are asked.
- Some learning benefits from a particularly well thought out approach. In a Year 2 story-writing activity, for example, pupils extended and clarified their ideas by acting out the events of the story.
- Marking is very effective. Pupils clearly understand that they are to read and respond to what is written and say that the improvement points they are asked to incorporate into their next piece of work helps them to improve.
- Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to lessons. For example, when the teacher recognises that the majority of the class are ready to move on but a small number of pupils have still not understood, the teaching assistant will go over the learning with them, perhaps in smaller steps or using visual aids.
- Homework practises and extends work done in school, and encourages pupils to pursue their individual interests further.
- Some activities, particularly when the whole class is working together, do not stretch the most-able pupils. When this occurs it limits their progress. Occasionally, too, these pupils are just given more work to do, rather than harder work. Where class sizes are small, teachers do not always capitalise on this arrangement and make sure that the most able pupils are consistently given work that challenges them.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding by asking, for example, 'How did you get that answer?' However, they generally take answers from those pupils who volunteer them, so the understanding of the more-reticent pupils is not checked.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- By the end of Year 6, attainment is above average. In reading in 2014, all pupils reached the expected standard and four in 10 exceeded it. In writing, all pupils reached the expected standard, and half exceeded it. Pupils' key skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling are also good, with eight in 10 pupils reaching the standard expected and just over half exceeding it. In mathematics, nine in 10 pupils reached the expected standard and nearly two-thirds exceeded it.
- In previous years, too, attainment has also been above average. In 2013, results were very impressive and the school was in the top fifth of schools throughout the country in standards reached by the time pupils leave the school.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school. In three of the last four years standards have been above average by the end of Year 2. In a constant search for improvement the school has employed an

extra teacher so that pupils in their first three years in school are taught small class groups. Although results improved in 2014, this arrangement is yet to have a marked impact on the standards achieved, particularly by the most able.

- The way topics are organised, allows particularly the most able to pursue new learning as far as they wish. However, the way some English and mathematics lessons are organised means that they are sometimes involved in learning they have already mastered, so the very best use is not made of their time.
- Throughout the school, speaking and listening skills are taught well and pupils quickly learn to express themselves in sentences and to listen to one another. Many discussions are of high quality with thoughtful comments.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of the way letters link to the sounds they make (phonics) because this early reading skill is taught well. Staff are very clear about the importance of elements such as mouth shape. Teaching assistants have been trained well and are used effectively so they can quickly correct any misconceptions. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 national screening check is improving every year in line with national averages.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points because the school knows their specific learning needs well and staff ensure that they have the right extra help.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Disadvantaged pupils close the gap to their peers and other pupils nationally, and often overtake them. The number of eligible pupils is too small to comment in detail on their attainment in English and mathematics without risk of identifying individual pupils.

### Early years provision

is good

- Children start Reception with skills and experiences which, overall, are similar to, or a little better than, those typically seen at this age, although this varies considerably from year to year. Most of last year's class started school at or above the typical level.
- Children settle quickly, largely because of the excellent transition from the various pre-schools. Home visits help staff and children to get to know one another well, and staff use what they learn to plan activities to arouse the children's interests when they start school.
- Children love learning. They follow every suggestion staff make with enthusiasm. They work together willingly. Any child feeling left out is quickly included in the activity by those around them, so children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school grounds are fully utilised.
- Teaching is good. A wide range of interesting activities greets children each day, and staff are skilled at asking the questions that promote learning. As elsewhere in the school, the most able are sometimes impatient to move on.
- Children achieve well and the vast majority, about nine out of 10, reach a good level of development. About a quarter exceed expectations in mathematics.
- Staff regularly and routinely check children's progress and use this information well to build on what children have achieved and are interested in, and to offer extra help if they have not yet understood.
- Parents are fully involved. They are encouraged to work with their children at home and given good advice on how to do this.
- Leadership and management of Early Years are good. Staff form an effective team. The indoor and outdoor environments are used effectively.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117117
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	448475

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	105
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Robin Osterley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Millward
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 842644
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<b>Email address</b>	head@hunsdon.herts.sch.uk

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