

# Hexton Junior Mixed and Infant School

Hexton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3JL

## Inspection dates

12–13 February 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The impressive leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has rapidly turned this school around. All the areas for improvement from the last inspection have been addressed.
- Governors have worked effectively with the local authority to secure strong leadership for the school. They have a clear vision for the future of the school.
- Standards have remained high despite considerable staff turbulence. Pupils' books show that they are making good progress in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their starting points. The effective special needs coordinator (SENCo) accurately identifies pupils' needs and ensures that they are met.
- Teaching is good due to strong direction from the new leadership team. The skilled and well-trained team of teaching assistants give effective support to pupils in lessons.
- Provision for pupils' welfare and personal development is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally caring and kind to each other.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically outstanding. Pupils are respectful to each other and all adults and listen attentively in lessons.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They are adamant that there is no bullying of any kind.
- Children in early years make good progress from their starting points in all areas of learning. Recent improvements in the quality of outdoor provision ensure that children have opportunities to explore and practise learning outside the classroom.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and are taught well in guided reading lessons. However, teachers do not check that pupils in key stage 2 choose books that they can understand and read independently.
- There are inconsistencies in the presentation of pupils' written work across the school.
- Pupils' learning in foundation subjects is not as secure as in reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum is currently being reviewed.

## **Full report**

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

- Ensure that the quality of presentation of pupils' written work is consistently good.
- Ensure that teachers regularly check pupils' choice of reading book in key stage 2 and that there are clear systems in place for what pupils should do if they come across words they do not understand.
- Ensure that the curriculum is designed to develop pupils' learning in all subjects as effectively as in English and mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have successfully steered the school through a period of substantial and unpopular change. The move from three to two classes combined with staff changes affected parents' confidence in the school and resulted in several families moving their children to other schools. However, the speed at which school leaders have turned this situation around is impressive.
- The headteacher's evaluation of the school is incisive and accurate. The school's development plan targets come directly from this evaluation and are sharply focused on the next steps for school improvement.
- All the parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those spoken to during the inspection, are extremely impressed with the new leadership team and recent improvements. One parent said: 'Considering all the fears we had, I was really surprised how much has happened in six weeks. It's like a different school and it's in a really happy place.' Other parents talked about how well difficult staffing issues have been managed. They are crystal clear that their children are learning well, making good progress and love coming to school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants say that the new leadership team is having an extremely positive impact on the school. They are clear about current improvement priorities and value the high-quality training they have received to improve the standard of pupils' writing in English.
- The SENCo has strong and effective systems in place to rapidly identify those pupils with SEND. She ensures that teaching assistants have a wide range of specialist training, so they can give effective support to the pupils they work with. The SENCo is passionate about securing the right support for pupils. She works effectively with external professionals and has recently secured additional funding to ensure that pupils with SEND get the best help possible to meet their needs.
- The curriculum is improving. This is evident in the range of interesting visits and visitors to the school. For example, during the inspection, a professional artist was working with key stage 2 pupils to create a wire sculpture for the sensory garden. However, the curriculum is better developed in mathematics and English than in other subjects. When pupils talk about what they have learned in history or geography, they do not have a secure understanding, for example, of time periods in history or the reason for changes in the course of rivers. There is not a clear progression for how pupils are taught to understand subject-specific concepts or how knowledge and skills are developed. Plans are in place for closer collaboration with a partner school to share and build teachers' subject knowledge and improve subject leadership and the quality of the curriculum.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and the next stage in their education. The school is at the heart of the local community and pupils are actively involved in local projects. For example, the local Member of Parliament recently visited the school and talked to key stage 2 pupils about his role and how government works. Pupils had prepared some challenging questions about his views on rural schools compared to

schools in towns. Year 6 pupils say that they have good opportunities to visit secondary schools once parents have selected which school they will attend.

## Governance

- Governance of the school is effective.
- The governors recognised two years ago that leadership lacked capacity and rightly approached the local authority for support. One governor said: 'We learned a lot last year. Now, with the headteacher and new deputy headteacher in place, we are back on track.'
- Governors acknowledge that they have been through a learning curve over the last year. They have taken on board advice from the local authority and consequently have secured strong and substantive leadership for the school.
- Governors have rigorously evaluated their skills and training needs. As a result, they have developed a stringent plan to improve their knowledge and understanding of the school, including how they conduct monitoring visits and evaluate the quality of education that pupils receive.
- Governors have a secure understanding of how the pupil premium funding and funding for pupils with SEND are used. For example, they robustly check the impact of provision and that funding is benefiting pupils.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All policies and procedures meet requirements.
- The school has rigorous and robust systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe. All staff know precisely what to do if a child raises a concern and are confident in using the new computer-based system for recording concerns. Senior leaders receive alerts if a concern is recorded and take immediate action to deal with this.
- Staff receive regular and effective training. Safeguarding is discussed at every staff meeting.
- Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies and rigorously follow up referrals to children's social care.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers plan interesting and engaging lessons that pupils enjoy. They have high expectations for what pupils can achieve by the end of a lesson. They check that pupils are working hard and to the best of their ability throughout the lesson.
- Teachers have adapted well to having more year groups in their classes. Pupils work in a variety of carefully selected groupings. Teachers ensure that pupils in each group have work that is sufficiently and appropriately challenging. For example, in a mathematics lesson in key stage 2, pupils concentrated well on working out different ways to calculate a given number. In this lesson, pupils demonstrated a strong

knowledge of multiplication tables and the ability to accurately and rapidly add and subtract numbers.

- Teaching assistants are confident to support pupils' learning effectively because they are well trained, and teachers give them clear guidance about what is expected for each lesson. Teaching assistants have high expectations for what pupils can achieve, and understand how to enable them to learn well. For example, in several lessons, skilful questioning by teaching assistants resulted in pupils understanding how to approach a task and think for themselves.
- Although the teaching of reading is effective in lessons, teachers have not kept a careful check on key stage 2 pupils' choice of reading books, or given them effective strategies to deal with words they do not understand when they are reading independently.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils understand and confidently use the 'HEX 6Rs', the school's learning and behaviour values, in their work and in their friendships with other pupils. For example, they show their resilience by not giving up on tasks even when they are challenging.
- Pupils show exceptional care and consideration for each other, including during breaktimes. For example, during the inspection, a large group of pupils were running around the playground. Suddenly one pupil fell over in the rush and an older pupil shouted, 'Stop!' At this command, everyone immediately stopped running and went to check the pupil was okay. According to pupils, such care and consideration are typical of daily life at the school. One pupil said: 'It feels really nice here because it's small and you can talk to people confidently; we're all really close and it's more like a family.'
- All parents who responded to Parent View or who spoke to the inspector made a point of highlighting the extremely nurturing environment the school provides. For example, one parent wrote: 'We have always been incredibly happy with the school, its sense of community and how each child is valued and nurtured as an individual. Children are always kind to each other and have friends in every age group.'
- Leaders place a strong and effective emphasis on developing pupils' well-being. For example, during the inspection as part of well-being week, pupils were enthralled by calming music and learned how to stretch and relax their bodies. One older pupil said: 'I really liked the yoga we did together. It was very calm and relaxing and a great way to start the day.'

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They listen attentively to their teachers and teaching assistants and follow directions sensibly, showing great

respect for adults and for each other.

- Breaktimes and lunchtimes are well organised and teachers and teaching assistants, who are also mid-day supervisors, talk to pupils and encourage them to play well together.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying at the school. One pupil said: 'I live a long way away but I'm really happy here because there's no bullying. Maybe some friends break up because they fall out over little things and then they get back together again.'
- Attendance has improved this term. There are robust and supportive systems in place to ensure that pupils attend school every day and on time. Pupils and parents value the various rewards leaders give for good attendance.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- This is a very small school, so comparisons with national standards for all pupils must be treated with caution. Small schools may see a wide variation in their results over time due to the effect that one or two pupils have on the school average. However, it is possible to evaluate the progress pupils make from their starting points.
- Pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in reading due to the strong and systematic teaching of phonics. Pupils use their phonic knowledge well to decode words. Reading books are carefully organised to match the stage of phonics pupils are learning in class. Pupils' writing was not as well developed, but a recent focus on making sure that pupils try to write without relying on adults to help them is beginning to have an impact. For example, in Year 2, pupils are beginning to write at greater length, especially in English.
- Pupils in key stage 2 make good progress in reading due to good teaching and support in lessons. Progress in writing has been less secure, but due to additional support for Year 3 and Year 4, is rapidly improving.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics in both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Work in pupils' books indicates effective coverage of the national curriculum and strong learning over time.
- Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of the good provision they receive.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Children start in early years with a range of different abilities. They settle in rapidly and make good progress due to effective teaching and a rapidly improving curriculum. Consequently, most are ready to start the national curriculum in Year 1.
- There is good leadership of early years. The early years leader has a strong understanding of how children learn in early years. She has ensured that there is an effective balance between direct teaching and giving children opportunities to explore and practise what they have learned in a range of activities they can choose for themselves. As a result, teaching is consistently good, and children make good progress from their starting points.

- The early years leader has recognised the importance of improving provision for learning outside. She has worked effectively with school leaders, parents and governors to make improvements to the outside area, ensuring it is tidy and carefully organised into areas of learning. Consequently, children make effective use of this space and the resources available. For example, during the inspection, a small group were talking excitedly about creating unusual potions, while another group created a dance sequence and sang number songs they had learned in a mathematics lesson.
- Children start learning phonics as soon as they start in Reception. They rapidly learn to read simple words, and a few are starting to use their phonic knowledge to read simple stories. Children are also learning to write letters, and a few can write short sentences. However, because there is no agreed handwriting system or style across the school, children's approach to forming letters is not consistent.
- Children's behaviour inside and outside the classroom is outstanding. Children listen carefully to adults' instructions and follow directions well. Children rapidly learn to collaborate on tasks and be kind and caring to each other.
- Children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. When children join the Reception class, their personal, social and emotional development is often at different stages and below that of other children their age. Children make exceptionally strong progress in this area of learning. This is due to direct teaching that focuses on how to manage emotions, including how to express and discuss feelings.

## School details

Unique reference number	117112
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10091019

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

Type of school	Mixed junior and infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Burgess
Headteacher	Sonia Fenner
Telephone number	01582 881248
Website	<a href="http://www.hextonschool.herts.sch.uk">www.hextonschool.herts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@hexton.herts.sch.uk">head@hexton.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2018

## Information about this school

- This school is a very small primary school.
- The school is part of a collaborative partnership with a nearby primary school.
- There has been considerable turbulence in leadership in the last two years.
- In January 2019, the school reduced from three to two classes. One class caters for Reception children and key stage 1 pupils. The other class caters for key stage 2 pupils. Several parents chose to remove their children from the school due to the reduction to two classes. The number of pupils on roll dropped from 56 to 40 at the start of this term.
- A new deputy headteacher and Reception and key stage 1 teacher joined the school in January 2019.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, business manager and SENCo are shared with the partner school. The deputy headteacher spends most of her time at Hexton.



- A small number of pupils live in the village of Hexton. The majority of pupils travel to school from surrounding villages and the nearby towns of Luton and Hitchin.
- The school is situated very close to the Bedfordshire border. A proportion of parents choose to move their children out of the school at the end of Year 4 to attend middle schools in Bedfordshire.
- School holidays in Bedfordshire are sometimes different from school holidays in Hertfordshire. Consequently, parents with children at school at Hexton and in Bedfordshire sometimes take holidays during the Hertfordshire term time.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a lower than average proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. A higher than average proportion of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

## Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo, the early years leader, groups of pupils, parents and staff, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' written work in English and foundation subjects and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2 and learning journeys in Reception.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including safeguarding procedures, attendance records, the school's own assessment information, the school's most recent self-evaluation document and the current school development plan.
- The inspector observed teaching in all classes. All visits to classrooms were made jointly with the headteacher or SENCo.
- The inspector scrutinised eight responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, eight text messages from parents and one letter from a parent. There were 11 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were 18 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Julie Winyard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). 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).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2019