



Katherine Semar Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114950
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279483
Inspection dates 2 February 2006 to 3 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. John Godwood LI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Ross Close
School category	Community		CB11 4DU
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01799 521120
Number on roll	217	Fax number	01799 523425
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Rosemary Raeburn-Smith
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Rachel Callaghan

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average for junior schools. It shares a site with the Katherine Semar Infant School. Most pupils come from the local area in Saffron Walden. The number who receive free school meals is average. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds, with a very small number from other White or Asian backgrounds. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties or a statement of special educational needs is about average. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Investors in People Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's own view is, that it is a good school. However, the inspection found it to be satisfactory with good features. Achievement is satisfactory. In most recent years, Year 6 test results have been above average. In 2005, however, results dropped and were average. Standards improved in English but declined in mathematics and science. The school is working effectively to improve standards. Pupils enjoy school and behave well. They are well cared for and their personal development is good. They have many cultural experiences and good opportunities to contribute to the school and community. Their attendance is outstanding. Teaching is satisfactory overall and often good. In the best lessons, pupils are inspired by teachers' enthusiasm and are very clear about the targets they achieve. In some lessons, however, pupils listen for too long and do not have enough opportunities to reflect on what they have learned. Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum that develops their basic skills and their creativity. Specialist teachers and links with other schools are used well. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and they are increasingly involved in assessing their own progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides strong leadership. Personnel difficulties have slowed progress but have been managed effectively. Subject leadership is improving and literacy is led well. Subject leaders monitor their provision and plan improvements, but this is not done consistently well. The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection and has the capacity to improve. It gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in mathematics and science, by continuing to track pupils' progress and improve teaching.
- Ensure that all lessons are well structured so that pupils are actively engaged and have the opportunity to review what they have learned.
- Be more systematic in monitoring standards and teaching in all subjects, and in planning improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. When they join the school their attainment is above average. In most recent years, the results in Year 6 national tests have also been above average. The results improved significantly in 2002 and were consistently above average from 2002 to 2004. In 2005, Year 6 results declined a little and were broadly average. The school met its targets and pupils made satisfactory progress. In English, the results improved as a result of an effective programme to improve the teaching of reading and literacy across the school. However, results declined in mathematics and science. The decline was due largely to staffing difficulties that affected the teaching of Year 6 pupils. In the current school year, considerable effort has been made to raise standards in mathematics and science through improved teaching and regular monitoring of pupils' progress, and to continue the improvement

in English results. This work has had a positive impact. In the 2005 results, boys made less progress than girls, although in previous years, boys and girls have done equally well. Evidence from the inspection indicates that currently boys are achieving as well as girls. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and make satisfactory progress. Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils generally behave well and have good relationships with staff and one another. They enjoy school and their attendance record is outstanding. Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the school community. Their views have been sought, for example, in planning lunchtime activities. In 'Friendship Week', they helped to develop the behaviour policy. The School Council is active. Pupils lead assemblies confidently and are well motivated by gaining house points and achievement certificates. All Year 6 pupils have responsibilities within school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. This is enhanced by a good range of physical activities, including regular swimming and physical education lessons from a sports coach. Pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring the numeracy and literacy skills that will help them in later life. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their cultural knowledge is promoted well in art and music lessons, through many trips and extensive use of the local community. They are encouraged to think of others, and raise large sums for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and there is much good teaching. Lessons are generally planned effectively for all ability levels. Pupils respond well and usually enjoy learning. They work well together and are often encouraged to think for themselves. Literacy is supported well through careful teaching of subject vocabulary. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported by teaching assistants. In the best lessons, pupils are very actively involved. They are very clear about what they are expected to learn and are sometimes inspired by teachers' enthusiasm and specialist knowledge. Teachers use questions well to deepen and extend pupils' understanding. In some lessons, however, the pace slows because pupils listen for too long and are not active enough. There are not enough questions that stimulate pupils to reflect on what they have learned. In a few lessons, teachers do not challenge pupils sufficiently because their subject expertise lacks depth. Assessment is satisfactory and is used increasingly to promote learning. Regular marking includes 'next steps' questions that help pupils to consolidate what they have learned. Class targets and self-assessment are beneficial in English, mathematics and science, but are not used consistently in other subjects. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and the results used to modify what is taught.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. It has a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. Provision for literacy has been improved through new programmes. The school is also committed to promoting pupils' creativity and enjoyment. Art and music have a high profile. The headteacher makes good use of teachers' expertise, including external teachers. Year 6 pupils learn French. There is a good range of clubs and activities, including art, chess, choir and sport, and many pupils attend. Pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. There are regular visits to galleries and museums, as well as residential trips. This extensive enrichment promotes pupils' interest in the arts and encourages them to lead an active and healthy life. The support for pupils with learning difficulties has recently been improved and is good. Gifted and talented pupils are extended through courses and events organised by the local community of schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. There are good procedures for child protection and ensuring safety in school. Teachers know the pupils well and provide a caring and supportive environment. Outside agencies are used well to provide additional support where needed. For example, some pupils benefit from 'Brain Gym' to help them concentrate. Behaviour is managed effectively and the excellent attendance is monitored very closely. Pupils are very well prepared for the transition to secondary school. They enjoy lessons from visiting secondary school teachers and regularly visit the secondary school to take part in activities. Liaison with the infant school has been improved but is less effective. Pupils feel well informed about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They know their short-term targets in English, mathematics and science, but do not have long-term targets for where they should be by the end of the year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides strong leadership with a good focus on raising standards. She has made significant improvements to broaden the curriculum and improve facilities. She uses staff expertise well and has developed the leadership skills of several staff. Personnel difficulties have slowed progress but have been dealt with robustly and effectively. Most staff work well as a team. The headteacher and key senior staff contribute well to the school's capacity to improve. The leadership of literacy is good and leadership of numeracy is developing well. The leadership of other subjects remains an area for development. Self-evaluation and school improvement planning are satisfactory. Parents are consulted and their views are acted on. Subject leaders monitor their subjects and write action plans, but this is not done consistently well. The match between subject plans and

whole school priorities is underdeveloped. There are good links with other schools, particularly the local secondary school. Relationships with the infant school on a shared site are less effective but include some productive links. Governance has developed well over the last year and is satisfactory. Governors visit the school regularly and monitor aspects of provision. They receive reports from staff and contribute to the school's direction, but have not yet developed formal procedures for this. Financial management is effective. Finances have been used well to develop the school buildings and facilities, including a new building for music and use by the community.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for your friendly welcome and for sharing your thoughts with us. Many of you told us that you enjoy school and that it is a happy community. Most of you behave well and are hardly ever away from school. Your teachers are fair and listen to what you have to say. They take good care of you. Your school helps you to develop well as young people. The School Council is active and older children are helpful as monitors. You raise a lot of money for charity. The school gives you many interesting opportunities, both in lessons and in the clubs and trips. You told us that many lessons are fun, especially when you have lots to do and are learning new things. You try hard and work well together. We saw many good lessons, but also a few where you did not learn so much. We have asked the school to try and make sure that all the lessons challenge you and help you to think about how much you have learned. The school has brought in good new ways of teaching literacy and the standard of literacy has improved. The teachers are working very hard to make sure that all of you make as much progress as you can. We have asked the school to keep this up and especially to make sure that you make good progress in maths and science. We have also asked the teachers in charge of subjects to check carefully that all the subjects are taught well in every class. Mrs Callaghan and her staff are committed to giving you the best opportunities to enjoy school and achieve well. The school has improved recently and we think that it will continue to improve. We feel sure that you will keep working hard to make even more progress and we wish you well with that.