



Ickniel Walk First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117278
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280030
Inspection dates 7 February 2006 to 8 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Andrew Matthews LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Poplar Drive
School category	Community		SG8 7EZ
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01763243392
Number on roll	325	Fax number	01763244764
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Simon Seabrook
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2000	Headteacher	Ms. Marilyn Jones

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average first school which has its own nursery. The school also has both a breakfast and an after school club. It serves a mixed residential area of Royston. The great majority of children are White British and no children speak English as an additional language. A below average number of children are eligible for free school meals and an average proportion of children have special educational needs. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status. Children's attainment on entry to the school is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors confirm the school's judgement that it is an effective school that provides good value for money and makes good use of its resources. Thorough self-evaluation procedures help the school to understand its strengths and weaknesses and to plan focused developments to improve its provision. As a result, children achieve well both academically and personally. They attain above average standards by Year 4 and make good progress through the school. Teaching is good and staff are knowledgeable about how to build on children's previous learning. However, some more able children are not consistently challenged in lessons and are not reaching the higher levels of which they are capable. Children are well cared for and feel safe and confident. They are very proud of their school, behave well and greatly enjoy their lessons. Parents are highly supportive of the school. The curriculum is well planned and areas of learning are particularly well integrated in the Foundation Stage. Standards and the quality of the Foundation Stage are good. Targets set for children are generally challenging and children's progress is tracked carefully through the year. The school is part of a local group of schools where effective practice is shared. The leadership and management of the school are good because of the high quality strategic direction given by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. Performance management is successfully improving all staff's expertise and raising expectations. Subject co-ordinators regularly check children's progress but their expertise is not used to the full as they rarely have time to monitor learning in the classrooms. The school has improved well since the last inspection and is in a strong position to build on these improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure regular time is provided for co-ordinators to share their expertise in the classroom with other teachers. - Ensure there is consistent challenge for more able children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Children enter the school with average attainment. They make particularly good progress in the nursery where the provision is very effective and they build well on their strong start in Reception. These children experience an exciting range of opportunities to learn through play and show impressive concentration when working independently. By the end of reception, the great majority meet the expected standards and a significant minority exceed them. Children continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 2 have achieved standards that are consistently above average. However, the school could do more to ensure its more able children are consistently challenged and achieve the higher levels. Standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science have remained high at the end of Year 4 because children make consistently good progress from Year 2. Girls recently have performed better than boys, but both now achieve similarly due to successful

intervention work to improve boys' writing. Challenging targets were met in 2005. Children achieve well overall because there is an expectation in every lesson that they will listen, behave well and work hard. Lower attaining children receive good assistance and encouragement from experienced assistants. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities receive well-focused support that ensures they are fully included in lessons and make good progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are effective. Children's attitudes are very positive and have a beneficial impact on their learning. They are extremely enthusiastic learners and show a high level of confidence when answering questions. Their behaviour is good and this also has a very positive impact on their progress. Attendance is well above average and the school is effective in encouraging parents to understand the importance of good attendance. The school is very good at celebrating children's achievements and encourages the development of their self-esteem through praise and displays. For example, in reception, teachers use digital photographs to create a display recording what children can do. Talking to children and observing them in lessons confirms their tremendous enjoyment of all aspects of school life. The school ensures children know effectively about developing safe and healthy lifestyles. Children make a very positive contribution to the wider community through a range of local and worldwide charity work. The school council also provides good opportunities for children to develop these skills. Children are well prepared for their future schooling and life outside school. This is achieved through their good personal and social development and through the development of a good level of basic skills. A real strength is the SPOT system which gives older children a range of responsibilities around the school based on trust. The children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. Their learning about multicultural aspects of society has improved since the last inspection because of its higher profile and more careful planning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and has a major impact on the progress made by children. Particularly strong are the relationships created by teachers and other adults with the children. These give children confidence to ask and answer questions confidently and without fear of failure. Experienced teaching assistants give well focused support to children, especially those who find learning difficult. They work very closely with teachers and form effective teams. Teachers' planning is detailed and in the great majority of lessons effective use is made of assessments of the previous lesson and evaluations of children's progress. Teachers' marking is thorough and supportive and the very good practice observed is rightly to be used to develop the

school's assessment policy further. The teaching in the Foundation Stage is very effective in developing children's basic skills and this has a clear impact on their attitudes to learning later on in the school. There are a few areas for improvement in the teaching. Some teachers do not consistently challenge their more able children and this results in lost opportunities for these children to reach the higher levels. Teachers work hard and undertake regular on-going training to help them make effective use of the recently installed interactive whiteboards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is effective and meets children's needs well. Literacy and numeracy are taught effectively. Children make increasing use of their information and communication technology skills to support their learning. Their learning is enriched well through programmes such as Thinking Skills Day or guitar lessons for all children in Year 3. There is a good range of popular clubs and out-of-school activities. The curriculum is further enhanced by a very popular residential trip for the oldest children. The work that children do is well planned to ensure that it builds steadily each year, including through their transition to middle school. Children in the Foundation Stage have a very well planned programme to support their development and independence. The support for children who have learning difficulties has been recently improved and is now good. Children have clear targets and effective liaison is maintained with parents. Gifted and talented children are identified and their progress is monitored carefully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good. There are suitable procedures for child protection and for ensuring safety in school. Children are well supervised and feel well cared for. They are confident that adults will deal with their concerns. The school effectively raises children's awareness of bullying and how to deal with it through assemblies and events such as 'Feeling Good Week'. Teachers and support staff co-operate well to care for children who are vulnerable or causing concern. The school keeps parents well informed and makes good use of external agencies to provide additional support when necessary. Children's numeracy and literacy targets are shared with their parents and homework diaries are used effectively for two-way communication between home and school. The school has thorough procedures to monitor children's progress. There is good support for children when they join the school. Strong liaison with local middle schools ensures that children are well prepared for this transition.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership and management are effective. The headteacher provides very experienced and astute leadership which is clearly focused on raising standards and

promoting the personal development and well being of all the children. She and her new deputy form a very strong team and their leadership is enabling the school to improve its provision. Subject co-ordinators regularly monitor children's work in their books, but their expertise is not used to the full as they are rarely able to observe their colleagues teaching. Performance management is very effectively implemented and linked effectively to children's achievement. The school has very good self-evaluation procedures which take into account views of parents, children, staff and governors. The school knows itself very well and priorities in its present improvement plan are very pertinent to its current needs. These are correctly focused on raising standards still further and ensuring that all children, particularly the more able, achieve as well as they can. New resources are carefully chosen to have maximum impact on the school's provision. For example, children are rightly excited about the new interactive white boards and the impact on their enjoyment and learning. The budget is tight but the school is aware of the need for renewing and updating many of its computers. Governance is now very good and governors provide a critical challenge to the school as well as giving knowledgeable support in such areas as finance and personnel. Their work has made a significant contribution to the effective improvements made since the last inspection and to the school's ability to improve further.

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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?	2	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	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	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and watching you working with your teachers. It was good to speak with your teachers about how well you work at school. We also enjoyed your singing in assembly. We think that your school does many things well, but there are a few things it needs to do better. What we liked most about your school - you really enjoy school, work hard and most of you do really well - your behaviour is good and you get on very well with each other and your teachers - your headteacher is doing a good job and she knows how to make the school even better for you - the school looks after you well and those of you who find work hard are getting the right sort of help. What we have asked your school to do now - give other teachers more opportunities to watch you working in class - make sure those of you who are good at work are given things to do which really make you think hard.