



Springmead Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117325
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280044
Inspection dates 1 March 2006 to 2 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Linda Killman LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hillyfields
School category	Community		AL7 2HB
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01707 331508
Number on roll	477	Fax number	01707 334562
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr.Michael Russell
Date of previous inspection	2 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Gill Cochrane

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	1 March 2006 - 2 March 2006	280044

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Numbers have increased over the past ten years and pupils come from a wide area. There is a higher than average number of ethnic minority pupils, some of whom do not speak English at home. When children start in the Nursery at age three, their abilities are generally above those expected, although in some years they are lower. The school hosts a new Primary Support Base which supports 12 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in local schools. The headteacher has been in post for 16 years. During this time the school has gained a number of awards including the Healthy Schools Award, the Gold Active Mark for physical education, Quality Mark for standards in the Foundation Stage, Basic Skills and Investor in People standard.

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 considers itself to be good with some outstanding features. Inspectors agree that, although there are some good and outstanding features, the pupils do not make consistently good progress throughout the school. Consequently the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory and it provides sound value for money. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and results in good achievement and standards. Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and make good progress to the end of Year 2. The standards the pupils attain by the end of Year 2. are well above the national average. Standards achieved by the end of Year 6 are above average but should be higher. Although better systems have been put in place to track pupil progress, the targets set for pupils to achieve by the end of Year 6 are insufficiently challenging. Between the ages of 7 and 11 progress is only satisfactory, in contrast to the good progress made by younger pupils. Managers have a reasonably clear picture of how the school is doing. They regularly evaluate the school's performance but are insufficiently rigorous in their analysis of data and assessment evidence. Leadership and management are good and provide clear direction for improvement. Progress on the main issues raised in the school's previous inspection is good. Parents have a high regard for the school and value all it has to offer their children. The school provides a welcoming, clean, attractive working environment in which everyone enjoys learning. The curriculum is well planned and enriched through visits and visiting speakers. The school offers an outstanding clubs programme and many of these provide opportunities for pupils to stay fit and healthy. Pupils are very well looked after and cared for and show outstanding behaviour and social skills. However, not enough guidance is given to learners about what they need to learn next to make as much progress as possible.

What the school should do to improve further

- Bring more rigour to the analysis of evidence that the school collects to support school self-evaluation.
- Check that pupils are making sufficient progress, based on evidence of their prior attainment and, if necessary, revise their targets to provide a greater degree of challenge.
- Improve marking so that pupils are given feedback that tells them exactly what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception and also across Years 1 and 2. Standards attained by Year 2 pupils in national tests are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils do particularly well in reading and writing, where a high number of pupils attain Level 3, which exceeds the standards expected nationally. Over time, standards in Year 6 national tests are generally above average in English, mathematics and science, with a good number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5. However, in 2005 the school did not meet its

challenging targets for Year 6 pupils. Boys made steady progress and did better than girls, whose progress was unsatisfactory. Pupils with a high degree of learning difficulties and disabilities make sound progress and others, whom the school had identified as experiencing some difficulty now make better progress. This is because the school is tracking the pupils' progress more closely. The school has recognised that there has been a weakness in the progress that pupils make between the ages of 7 and 11 and has put in suitable measures to address this. Inspection evidence shows that the school's re-introduction of national programmes such as Springboard Mathematics to give learners in Key Stage 2 a boost is having a positive impact. Efficient systems are being used to track progress and targets are being revised, but they are insufficiently challenging. Progress is currently sound for all groups of pupils in this age range. Standards and progress in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The pupils enjoy coming to school and speak highly of it. Attendance is above average and the school has effective systems in place to follow up absences. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. They have very good attitudes to their work in school and most show enthusiasm in whatever they do. Pupils have well-developed social skills and work well with others. Many of them are confident in taking on responsibilities for managing some aspects of life at school, for example as lunchtime monitors and as 'buddies' in the playground. Their moral and spiritual development is good as a result of the emphasis that the teachers place on promoting consideration for others and encouraging pupils to think about the effect their actions have on others. The adults provide excellent role models for the pupils. Pupils develop a good understanding of cultures other than their own and economic awareness. Pupils have a very good understanding of the benefits of healthy eating and regular physical exercise as a result of the emphasis given to them in the school's curriculum. Concerns for their own safety and that of others are reflected in a recently composed 'protest song' to make parents aware of the need for safe parking of cars near school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with very good features. In all classes teachers have established very good relationships with their pupils and are models of high standards in kindness and good manners for the pupils. Teaching assistants have high levels of expertise and effectively support pupils. In the nursery, teaching is exceptionally good. All staff work very well together as a team to provide high quality learning experiences. Consequently, these young children love coming to school and make exceptional progress in learning school routines and how to work and play.

together. Elsewhere, teaching and learning are good. In outstanding lessons, teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge and set very high expectations for their class to work at a good rate and produce high quality work. There is, now, a much stronger focus on using the information from tests and teachers' checks on pupils' work to ensure that each pupil achieves as well as possible. This focus has halted the decline in achievement of pupils in Key Stage 2. Teachers mark pupils' work but do not always provide them with a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good and it meets statutory requirements, including those for the design and technology, which was not the case in the last inspection. The provision of enrichment activities is outstanding and their take-up is exceptionally high. Sufficient time is allocated to teaching literacy and numeracy and some pupils whose performance requires boosting are being provided with additional support. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage now provides good opportunities for young children to think for themselves and make choices as they play and this reflects a clear improvement since the last inspection. The recent emphasis on establishing links between various subjects of the curriculum, particularly the use of ICT across the curriculum is adding to pupils' motivation for learning. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well-matched to their needs and, as a result, most make sound progress. Emphasis on improving pupils' reasoning and explanations, particularly in their work in science and mathematics, is insufficient and contributes to some lack of progress in these subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good because of the high priority given to them by the school. Pupils learn in a secure and safe working environment. They are confident that their views will be heard, either individually or through the School Council. The child protection arrangements are clear and all staff, including the support staff, receive regular training. Bullying is rare and pupils feel that, when it happens, it is dealt with firmly. The school has good procedures for identifying pupils who are at risk or in need of support, and systems are in place to keep track of the progress they make towards their targets for improvement. Pupils receive regular feedback on their work, but teachers are not explicit enough about how it can be improved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides a strong lead. Through their commitment and dedication they have created a caring and inclusive working atmosphere that enables pupils' personal development to flourish. The school

has recognised that the decline in standards in Key Stage 2 over the past few years has needed addressing and has put in a range of strategies to deal with this. It is developing its ability to use data to track and improve the performance of individual pupils, although it is not yet sufficiently rigorous. A watchful eye is being kept on the impact of purposeful steps taken to secure improvement in the progress of older pupils. The school's development plan clearly identifies areas for improvement in learning and teaching to raise standards and achievement. There is a systematic programme of observing lessons and evaluations are accurate, though feedback to teachers does not draw enough attention to the impact of teaching on learners. The governing body is effective and provides a very good level of support and challenge. Parents' views are regularly sought and their feedback is carefully considered. Good progress has been made on the key issue raised in the previous inspection, namely to improve the curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage. The interior and exterior of the building are very well maintained, providing a pleasant, vibrant setting for learners. They benefit from the investment that has been made in special features such as the all-weather sports area and the outdoor classroom facility. The school's managers are leading the school forward purposefully and provide the school with a good capacity to make further improvements.

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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	2	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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	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	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	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 welcoming the inspectors to your school. We enjoyed spending time with you and watching you at work and at play. We were very impressed with your politeness and how open and friendly you were when you talked with us. What you told us about your school was very helpful. You really enjoy coming to school and get on well together. You trust your teachers and other adults to help you if you are having problems. The school cares for you and encourages you to be healthy and to keep safe. Your behaviour is exceptionally good in lessons and around the school. You show great respect for others. You take part in a wide range of enjoyable activities during and after the school day. Mrs Cochrane and all of the other adults in the school work very hard as a team and are interested in finding ways to help you to learn even more. This is what we have asked them to do: - Check regularly to see that you are all on track to reach your targets. - Challenge the older children even more to learn as much, and as fast as they can; and - Tell you exactly what you need to learn when they mark your work. A lot will be expected from you in the months and years ahead because your teachers want the best for you. They teach you well. You are good learners and we are confident that you will rise to the challenge and achieve even more in the future. We wish you every success.