



Samuel Lucas Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117337
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280048
Inspection dates 6 February 2006 to 7 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Colin Henderson LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Gaping Lane
School category	Community		SG5 2JQ
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 456 737
Number on roll	236	Fax number	01462 457 360
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Frances Reid
Date of previous inspection	22 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs. Sarah Anderson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Most pupils come from the local community, an area of Hitchin that is mainly above average socially and economically. Attainment on entry is above average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. The number of pupils with additional learning needs is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Three per cent of pupils speak English as a second language, although all speak it fluently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It is valued highly by parents and pupils. Overall, pupils' achievement is good. Children make a good start in the Reception classes as a result of good and often very good teaching. This is built on successfully in Years 1 to 6, where pupils' enthusiastic attitudes and good teaching, especially in Years 2 and 6, help them to make good progress. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they clearly enjoy learning. Pupils attain well above average standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Teachers track pupils' progress closely and meet the range of their learning needs. Teachers use targets effectively to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. In music and art and design, the interesting curriculum and the effective use of teachers' subject expertise help pupils to achieve very well. Key factors in the school's success are its outstanding, caring ethos, good teaching, effective links with parents and the strong team of staff and governors, led very well by an influential and purposeful headteacher. The school carefully checks on how well it is doing, although the use of subject leaders to improve teaching and learning is not rigorous enough. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Incisive action taken by the headteacher and her deputy is improving achievement and establishing good procedures to identify and target any under achievement in a small number of pupils. The school has an accurate view on how well it is doing, although inspectors judged personal development and care to be better than good. It provides good value for money and is very well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to check pupils' achievement closely to identify and improve any under-achievement. - Extend the monitoring of teaching to improve subject leaders' understanding of its effect on pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout the school, confirming the school's judgement. Good teaching helps children in the Foundation Stage to achieve well and they attain above expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. This good progress continues from Year 1 to Year 6, with particularly good achievement in Years 2 and 6 as a result of very good teaching and pupils' very enthusiastic attitudes to work. Year 2 pupils attain standards that are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics and reflect the results of national tests. This is built on successfully and, by the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are well above average. They are particularly high in science. The school identified under-achievement in national tests by some Year 6 pupils in 2003. Good teaching and careful tracking has improved this and the school is establishing a more consistent focus on the achievement of all pupils. Most pupils who find learning hard are supported well and make good progress. Those with special gifts and talents are challenged well to extend their skills. The school achieved its

challenging target in the 2005 Year 6 tests in English but was just below its target in mathematics. The school is likely to achieve its challenging targets for 2006. The good use of teachers' specialist subject knowledge help pupils achieve very well in music and art and design.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils behave very well and have excellent relationships with staff and one another. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is reflected in their outstanding attendance record and high levels of participation in after-school and lunchtime activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good. They participate in an extensive range of valuable learning experiences, including the Hitchin Music Festival and Rhythms of the World Festival. They are encouraged to think of others less fortunate than themselves and raise money for local and international charities. As a result, they have a very good understanding of living in a diverse society and are caring members of their school and wider communities. Pupils know where to seek advice when they need help and the school council represents their views regularly. They know the importance of staying healthy and have a good awareness of how to keep safe. This is enhanced by an outstanding range of physical activities, including fun and competitive sports. This excellent provision helps pupils to lead an active and healthy life. Pupils work well together and develop good basic skills that will help them in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because teaching is good. It is often outstanding, particularly in Year 6. Lessons are lively, well planned and use a broad range of styles to promote pupils' interest and involvement. This leads to an enjoyment of learning, as reflected in many pupils commenting that 'lessons are fun'. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and attitudes and ensure that they stay focused on their learning. Pupils are encouraged to use their 'talking partners' or work in small groups, which contributes strongly to their learning of basic skills. Teachers use questions well to extend pupils' learning, although, in some lessons, more able pupils could be stretched by being asked more complex questions. Teaching assistants are effectively used to provide good support to individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers use effective assessment procedures to check on pupils' learning and to guide their teaching. They use improvement targets successfully to help particular groups of pupils to raise their achievement in literacy and numeracy. Teachers mark pupils' work well showing clear points for improvement, and assessing progress towards their targets. Teachers clearly point out to pupils what they are trying to achieve. This gives a clear focus to their learning. Teachers encourage pupils to assess how well they have achieved and this is used effectively to guide teaching and improve pupils' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good range of interesting learning experiences is relevant to the needs of all pupils. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, although opportunities to extend these skills consistently in other subjects are not developed fully. Music and art have a high profile within the school. Many pupils learn to play an instrument and are members of the school orchestra and choir. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn Italian and many pupils attend French club. This extensive enrichment promotes pupils' interest in the arts and helps them to develop an understanding of other cultures. The school provides a very good range of additional activities for pupils to enjoy, including willow weaving skills and technology workshops. Local members of the community visit the school to talk about various aspects of their work. For example, a local magistrate worked with Year 6 pupils to heighten their understanding of the English legal system and social justice.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Teachers and support staff know pupils very well and work hard to provide an outstanding level of care. Pupils with additional learning needs are identified early and supported very effectively. Outside agencies are used well to provide additional support where needed. Gifted and talented pupils are given additional guidance through courses and events held at local secondary schools. This excellent level of care makes pupils feel valued and well looked after. There are well established procedures for child protection and ensuring safety in the school. The school grounds and buildings are well maintained and staff and pupils take pride in, and care for their school. There are very good links with the local nursery, and this helps children settle very quickly when they join the school. Throughout the year pupils in Year 6 enjoy participating in a range of activities organised by the local secondary school and this ensures that the transition of pupils from one school to another is unthreatening.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management are influenced by the very good leadership of the headteacher, supported by a very effective deputy. The headteacher is well respected by pupils and parents and provides a clear sense of purpose to the work of the school that is fully shared by staff and governors. As a result, they work well as a team to promote the 'care, co - operate, contribute' ethos consistently. Their efforts are valued by parents - 'the commitment of all the teachers is unwavering'. The headteacher's understanding and incisive action have enabled the school to provide a good quality of education and improve pupils' achievement, despite a high level of staff changes. The contribution of governors has improved hugely since the last inspection. Governors work in a successful partnership with the head and her staff and have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and what it needs to

improve. Development planning is used well to achieve those improvements. The school uses good systems to check its performance, which include tracking pupils' progress carefully, monitoring teaching and seeking the views of parents and pupils. Some key subject leaders provide an invaluable contribution to pupils' achievement, for example, in literacy. The school is planning to help other subject leaders follow this example. The effective leadership, together with a strong team of staff and governors and parental support, puts the school in a very good position to improve.

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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?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	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?	1	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 friendly and making us feel welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. What we liked most about your school: - Your teachers and other adults care about you as individuals, make sure that you are safe and listen to your opinions about school. - You get on well together and are kind to each other. We like the way older pupils help younger ones. - Most of you get to school on time and behave very well. This means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. - All the adults put a lot of effort into helping you do well and try to make your lessons interesting. You enjoy your work and try hard to do what your teachers ask. We think you all learn well. - The school puts on a lot of extra activities to help you have fun, like the clubs and trips out of school. We know you enjoy these very much. - Mrs Anderson, the teachers and governors who run your school are doing a good job and they want to make your school even better. - Your parents think it is a good school, and we agree. What we have asked the school to do now: - Provide more opportunities for teachers who are responsible for particular subjects, to look carefully at each others' teaching and see where they can help you to achieve even better. - Continue to check carefully that all of you are achieving as well as you can. We hope that you continue to be happy at school and learn well.