



# Applecroft School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117355  
**LEA** HERTFORDSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 280054  
**Inspection dates** 10 October 2005 to 11 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Geof Timms LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Applecroft Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		AL8 6JZ
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01707323758
<b>Number on roll</b>	540	<b>Fax number</b>	01707393188
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr.R Andrew
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. . Parsey

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 10 October 2005 - 11 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280054
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

## **Description of the school**

The school is well above average size for a primary school. It serves an area of fairly high social and economic advantage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The large majority of pupils are of white British origin, but there is a wide range of other backgrounds, including pupils of mixed race, black and Asian heritage. Five children are at an early stage of learning English. The main languages spoken, other than English, are German, French and Spanish. Fewer pupils have learning or physical difficulties than in most schools.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's overall effectiveness is good, a view that is shared by the school. The school has been through a significant period of turbulence in the past two years, with many changes to leadership and teaching staff. The school's management has worked hard to overcome these difficulties to maintain standards at an above average level. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good, and the quality of teaching and management is outstanding. Children achieve well by the end of the reception year and exceed the standards expected nationally. However, the nursery building and grounds are not in good condition although staff work very hard to avoid problems. Pupils achieve well as they move through the school, especially in mathematics and science, and typically achieve standards considerably above the average by Year 6. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This in turn leads to very good attitudes and relationships between children and teachers. Pupils throughout the school enjoy their education and take seriously the need to stay fit and healthy. Teaching is mainly good. The curriculum is well-planned and enriched through clubs and visits. Good provision is also made for pupils' care and welfare. Leadership and management are good and their impact can be seen in pupils' improved achievements in 2005 in English which reversed a dip in the previous year. The provision for information and communication technology is much improved and overall, the school demonstrates its ability to tackle its weaknesses. The school provides good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the consistency of the teaching by spreading the very good practice that exists to all year groups. - Seek to improve the quality of accommodation in the nursery

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The majority of the children have attainment above that typically found when they start in the nursery. By the end of the reception year progress has been good and standards are above those typically found when children begin Year 1. Strengths include children's creative work, and their personal and social development is also strong. Standards by Year 2 are considerably above the national average, but they dipped in 2004 to be closer to average. However, the school has worked hard to raise pupils' achievements further under new leadership since then. The results in 2005 have improved significantly in reading, writing and mathematics and achievement is good. Standards in Year 6 are also well above average. Pupils achieve well, particularly so in mathematics and science, but in 2004, standards and pupils' progress were not as good in English. The fall was mainly in pupils' writing. The school has worked hard in a variety of ways to improve pupils' skills in this area. The 2005 results are better, even though this cohort had lower attainment in their tests in Year 2 than the previous year group. Pupils with English as an additional language and those who are gifted and

talented achieve well. Those few pupils with learning difficulties make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils' standards in information and communication technology are above those typically found by Year 6, and the school helps children to produce some very high quality work in art and design.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good and this benefits children's learning significantly. The youngest children get off to a flying start and develop strong social skills. As they grow older the children happily take on responsibilities. Their immense enjoyment and love of learning helps them behave very well and respond to praise with great pride. Children with language needs or learning difficulties take a full part in lessons, which helps to raise their self-esteem and confidence. Attendance is good and most children are eager to arrive on time. Children enjoy excellent relationships and have a say in the running of their school through, for example, the school council. Older children look after the younger ones. They know how to stay safe and adopt healthy lifestyles through regular exercise and plenty of sporting activities. Children participate well in local community fund-raising events and church activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children enjoy learning about the wonder of the world around them. For example, they showed enormous excitement during an infant assembly as a Russian doll was revealed. Children are tolerant and thoughtful towards each other and have a very strong sense of right and wrong. They have great respect for each other and their teachers, valuing equally a diversity of beliefs and cultures.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall. Some is outstanding but there are some weaknesses in planning in a few lessons. The school's view of where strengths and weaknesses lie is accurate and guides the focus of support that senior managers provide. Most teachers plan lesson activities carefully to promote children's thinking skills and make sure that learning is enjoyable. They deploy teaching assistants well and make excellent use of interactive whiteboards in lessons. In Years 1 to 6, teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and they manage them well. As a result, pupils are eager to please and work hard to achieve challenging targets in literacy and numeracy. The pace of lessons is occasionally too slow where teachers do not always plan precisely enough for the different abilities within the classes. Teachers mark work regularly and provide very useful comments to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Assessment procedures are good. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. In one lesson seen, the activities were matched precisely to the different learning needs of the children. As a result, most made exceptional progress in identifying the features of different fruits.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well matched to children's needs and abilities, and it prepares them well for the next step in their education. The school provides very good opportunities to enhance the curriculum and children greatly enjoy the many visits, clubs, and residential school journeys provided. For example, in an account of a recent school trip to Wales, where children took part in outdoor pursuits such as abseiling and raft building, one wrote, 'I thought it was one of the best experiences of my life. I would definitely do it again'. Children enjoy performing in the community as members of the school's orchestra. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education, and so children learn about healthy and safe living. There are good opportunities for children to work in teams, in competitive sports, for instance. With the effective support of an industry link, the school has introduced an enterprise project; this enables older children to explore how people's decisions affect their daily lives and economic well-being.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good induction arrangements ensure that the youngest children soon settle. The school provides a safe and healthy environment where children feel secure. They appreciate the healthy school meals that are offered, and take advantage of the fact that drinking water is freely available in classes. There is good support for those children that need medicines during the school day. There are robust systems for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare. Child protection procedures are secure, and staff carefully document incidents and accidents. A close watch is kept on pupils' academic progress towards their targets, and suitable support is arranged when necessary. Those with special educational needs are assessed and appropriate provision made for them. Staff work closely with other professionals, and with parents, to make sure that individual needs are identified and met. However, the monitoring and review of progress in relation to their education plans should be more frequent to ensure that good progress is maintained. Year 6 children are well supported in making the transition to secondary schooling successful.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has had significant changes to its leadership, management and teaching staff over the last two years. These have resulted in some disruption to provision and a fall in achievement in 2004. However, there is now a very effective leadership team in place and its impact can be seen in the improved standards in 2005 in Year 2 and in English at Year 6 where prompt action was taken. There are aspects of the leadership that demonstrate very good qualities. The headteacher has acted promptly to introduce necessary improvements to the school improvement planning, self-evaluation and the control of the school's finances. The senior staff are setting an excellent, well-focused

educational direction for the work of the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest, and provides a very good basis for further improvement. It is broadly based and takes account of pupils' and parents' views. Performance management has been effectively introduced together with the requirements of the teachers' workload agreement. The headteacher has a very clear grasp of what needs to be done to raise standards that is summarised in the school's improvement plan. Staff with leadership responsibilities are driving through these priorities effectively. The fabric of the school has been much improved, although the nursery accommodation requires significant improvement. The school has demonstrated its ability to tackle weaknesses through its prompt actions to reverse a drop in standards identified in 2004 and the subsequent improvements seen. The work of the governing body has also improved over the last year and a half and it is now much more effective in holding the school to account. Governors have a good structure of committees to ensure their work is carried out efficiently, and they are involved in monitoring the school's work and in shaping its direction.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	3	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 us to your school when we visited. It was a pleasure to talk to you and to watch you working and playing. We particularly enjoyed meeting some of the school council who told us a lot about the things you like doing at school and some things you would like to see improved. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things we saw. You are very lucky at your school because the headteacher, teachers and other adults all look after and care for you well. They encourage you to be healthy and to stay safe, and ensure you have good opportunities to learn new things. We were impressed at how well you behave and take part in your lessons. The older children enjoy looking after the younger ones. You really enjoy your trips and visits, and also a lot of you take part in the clubs and other activities offered. Mrs Parsey and your teachers are keen to make the school even better for you. They have already got a good idea of how they can do this. We also think that they need to make sure that all of the lessons are as well taught as the best ones are, you really do have some excellent teachers. The nursery building is very old and in poor condition and needs to be improved or replaced. It was good to find out that so many of you were happy at school, and that your parents said you were happy there as well. Keep working hard and enjoy your time at Applecroft!