



Hursthead Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106053
Local Authority Stockport
Inspection number 287398
Inspection dates 23–24 October 2006
Reporting inspector John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Kirkstead Road
School category	Community		Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle
Age range of pupils	7–11		Cheshire SK8 7PZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 4396961
Number on roll (school)	331	Fax number	0161 4396961
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr R Denton
		Headteacher	Mrs C Williams
Date of previous school inspection	25 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves an advantaged residential area with a below average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a few are learning English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school achieved Beacon School status and a large range of external awards. In 2005 and 2006, the school has been included in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) 'Best of the best' list of schools. The headteacher has been in post since September 2006 after having been the deputy headteacher for many years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school, and many parents, are right to judge the school as outstanding. Over many years, the school has enabled pupils to achieve very well and reach high academic standards and, for this reason, the school is judged to give outstanding value for money. In addition, the school has been assiduous in developing pupils' personal skills and attitudes. These significant outcomes for the school have been brought about by challenging teaching, an exemplary curriculum, high levels of care and excellent leadership and management. As one parent put it: 'This is our second child at what is an excellent and well led school.'

Pupils enjoy school very much and are very appreciative of the support and guidance they are given. Clear indications of this are provided by the well above average attendance and the high levels of interest in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sport, music and many other clubs. The high academic standards mean that pupils are very well prepared for their future education and the world beyond the school. Older pupils are independent, helpful and supportive to the younger pupils in the school and the school council makes a sound contribution to the day-to-day and strategic direction of the school. The excellent teaching promotes the high levels of academic performance and personal development. Pupils are very actively encouraged to be independent learners and to show excellent attitudes to their work and the school. Clearly, much of this is highly successful but there are some small inconsistencies in the way that some teachers set learning targets for the pupils and mark to those targets. While this does not have a significant effect on standards and progress, it does mean that pupils may not have all the tools they need to become fully independent learners. Pupils are very clear that they are safe and secure in school, and the school's exemplary care procedures correctly foster this confidence. Throughout the school, the curriculum provides a very broad range of opportunities for pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, and pupils talk confidently about these matters.

None of this would be possible without excellent leadership and management. The headteacher provides an excellent example by knowing the school very well and foreseeing the direction the school needs to go to continue developing. For example, she rightly recognises the need to widen consultation with all who have a stake in the school. Staff with extra responsibilities feel valued and provide very strong leadership in their areas of expertise and responsibility. The headteacher and staff are complemented by a highly knowledgeable and challenging governing body. They also know the school very well and bring a wealth of experience and expertise to bear on their duties. All partners have played a very strong part in ensuring the maintenance of high standards and quality of provision since the last inspection. The school's capacity to improve is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the use of target-setting and marking is consistently of the highest quality.

- Raise the profile and influence of the school council in the day-to-day management and strategic development of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Attainment on entry to the school is above average. From this favourable beginning, the school has been identified by HMCI as one of the 'Best of the best' schools nationally because achievement and progress are outstanding. There is a track record over many years of high standards in English, mathematics and science. In some years, such as 2005, national test results in writing were lower than usual and this led to significant work being done successfully to bring about improvement. The excellent and high 2006 results are evidence of the school's success in continuing to raise standards. The 2006 results in all subjects showed that pupils' progress was significantly higher than expected for pupils of the same age. All pupils benefit from the drive to raise standards, with gifted and talented, minority ethnic and higher-attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities making excellent gains in their learning. There is no significant difference to the progress made by boys and girls. These outcomes could not be achieved without high quality teaching and a very wide curriculum. Pupils are challenged really well and the expectations are high. As a result, they find learning to be interesting and stretching. In English, Year 6 pupils are invited to introduce similes in their work to bring vividness to their writing. In mathematics, Year 5 pupils explain their working when confronted with a very difficult investigation into numbers and number sentences. Beyond this, the pupils achieve high standards in other subjects such as art, physical education and modern foreign languages. Furthermore, their high quality basic skills are used well in subjects like history to illustrate their very good understanding of life and events during the Second World War.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are highly reflective thinkers who very sensitively consider the feelings of others. First-class social and moral development leads to outstanding behaviour and relationships. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy school. Their attendance is well above average. Cultural awareness is developed well in lessons and through multicultural displays and is supported strongly by a range of visiting speakers. Pupils demonstrate a willingness to make a very good contribution to local and global charities by regularly donating the proceeds from their own enterprise activities. The school council provides a good experience of citizenship but it has a limited involvement in school decision making. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. Pupils' excellent academic skills, knowledge and understanding and exemplary attitudes mean they are exceptionally well placed to do well in their future schooling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Pupils benefit from an array of strengths in the quality of teaching. High quality work and achievement were seen in many books. Typically, planning and expectations provide pupils with high levels of challenge in their learning across all subjects. Pupils accept the challenge and, with their exceptional basic skills, produce work that they and their parents are very proud of. Teachers manage lessons extremely well and, as a result, the pace of learning is brisk and there are very few interruptions. In many lessons, teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) exceptionally well to introduce and reinforce learning. Assessment information is used very well to identify learning needs. In a Year 5 dance lesson, one of the groups was clearly having difficulties and the accurate assessment of the situation meant the teacher could help them to improve their performance immediately. Across the school, there is a small level of inconsistency in the setting of learning targets for individuals and the marking of pupils' work. Although this does not have a major effect on the very strong matching of work to individual pupils' needs, pupils are not as independent as they could be in their learning as they move through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is of high quality and makes an exemplary contribution to all areas of pupils' personal development. It is regularly reviewed to ensure that it matches the needs of these pupils. Enrichment is excellent and the learning programme is very broad. Excellent links between subjects allow pupils to apply their high level of basic literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects; most notably, fostering the high standards in history. Provision for physical education is very good and reflected in the school's Activemark award. Art is also very strong and fosters very good achievement as demonstrated through the Gold Artsmark award. The provision for modern foreign languages enriches the curriculum considerably. Pupils clearly enjoy learning a range of languages and the vibrant way in which they are taught. ICT provision is good and the school has achieved the Quality Mark.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Academic and personal development of all groups of pupils is, overall, tracked very thoroughly. As a result, various needs are met and pupils make excellent progress. Gifted and talented pupils are very well catered for, particularly in literacy and numeracy, where pupils belong to groups that are identified according to differing ability levels. There are very effective child protection and health and safety systems in place to ensure that pupils' well-being is paramount. Transition arrangements are extremely effective from the Infants to the Juniors, where an excellent buddy system

exists between pupils from Year 2 and Year 5. Close liaison with the local high schools also ensures good transition. Throughout the school, there is a high level of commitment from the staff, who seek to improve upon the high standards achieved by the pupils and make them even higher.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leaders and managers are right to focus on providing a very broad and relevant education for the pupils. As a result, the outcomes for pupils are excellent in both personal and academic achievements. Self-evaluation is very effective and leads to outstanding action planning and highly appropriate management objectives. It also provides the school with an outstanding capacity to improve.

High quality curriculum management benefits from the shared sense of purpose and the involvement of the excellent governors, headteacher and subject coordinators. Financial management is very prudent and resources are very well deployed to meet the increasingly sophisticated needs of pupils. Governors challenge management well and are involved in all aspects of school business. A committee system efficiently monitors the various areas of delegated decision making. Links with parents are good and the new headteacher has rightly started work on more actively seeking their views, as she has with the new school council for this year.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The inspectors really enjoyed being in your excellent school. It was a privilege and a pleasure for us to work with you and the staff. We give a special thank you to those who talked with us and we were very impressed by the courtesy and help you provided.

What we think is exceptional about your school:

- the outstanding progress made by all the pupils and the high quality work you produce
- your excellent skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT
- the high standards in art, physical education and modern foreign languages
- the high levels of enjoyment and attitudes to work that you show, and the exceptionally varied and interesting work that you are given
- your exemplary behaviour and the way that you very willingly take responsibility and help others, for example, with the youngsters in the infant school
- the high quality of teaching and care, much of which is outstanding, and the hard work of all the staff
- the excellent leadership and management shown by your teachers and governors, which ensures that the school continues to seek improvement.

What we have asked your teachers to improve:

- the way that the school gathers your opinions and uses them to help in the running of the school - you can help by sharing your views about school with the councillors
- to make sure that the system for setting your learning targets and the marking based on those targets are consistent across all classes - you can assist by making sure that you know what your targets are and work hard to achieve them.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.