

Perryfields Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114903
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290072
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Elson
Headteacher	Mrs Doretta Cowie
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2002
School address	Lawn Lane Chelmsford Essex CM1 7PP
Telephone number	01245 250781
Fax number	01245 344527

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly larger than average. About 10% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national average as is the percentage of those with a statement detailing their needs. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school is a member of a local consortium of schools to support pupils before and after school and part of another to extend professional development and learning opportunities. Pupils' attainment on entry reflects a full range of ability and shows year-by-year variation from broadly average to well above average.

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 in which happy, confident pupils achieve well and attain above average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are good. This is because the headteacher stresses the importance of developing the inter-relationship of both aspects. Pupils achieve well in this school because they receive good care and guidance and what they do in and out of lessons is interesting and fosters good attitudes to learning and to each other. As one pupil said, 'School is great...it's fun but it's educational.' Year 6 pupils are ready for the next steps in their education because they are mature, socially adept, academically skilled and enjoy learning. The school provides good value for money.

Pupils make good progress because teaching is good. Skills in literacy and numeracy are taught thoroughly and systematically. Some marking and target setting is skilled but such expertise is not embedded across the school. Consequently, pupils are not always clear what it is they have to do in order to improve because they are not clear about their targets. Through year and school councils, pupils have a voice in how the school is organised. A Year 6 pupil thought that, 'Everyone gets a chance to express an opinion.' The school's behaviour policy is effective and as a result the school has a calm, productive working ethos. Pupils feel safe because they are confident that the headteacher will sort out any problems. They are encouraged to tell a member of staff if they have a concern or to raise issues anonymously in classroom 'worry boxes'. The school does not tolerate bullying. Racist incidents are very rare because of the school's underlying ethos of developing respect for others and work undertaken to broaden pupils' cultural horizons. Attendance is above average.

Leadership and management across the school are good. The school is led very well by the headteacher. She is ambitious for the school and its pupils. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, work together very well for the benefit of all pupils. The headteacher has created a professional collegiate ethos in which all teachers have leadership responsibilities and are working together to improve the school further. The school has good capacity to improve. The governing body is effective. The inspection provides a snapshot of a school in transition and improving, building on its established strengths. It is helped in this because the school's self-evaluation is good. There is a detailed improvement plan to take the school forward but the school has not identified the criteria to judge when it has successfully implemented the various proposed initiatives. This makes the process of identifying the steps needed to progress towards the objective difficult.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils understand their targets and what they have to do in order to improve their work.
- Identify in the school improvement plan, and where appropriate quantify, how the school will recognise that it has been successful in implementing the various initiatives and the year-on year steps and targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in 2005 were above average. Pupils did less well in 2006 and standards were average. In 2006, pupils made better progress in mathematics and science than in English. This is because the percentage of pupils gaining the higher level (Level 5) was below average in English.

Current standards are above average and pupils make good progress and achieve well. Unvalidated results for 2007 indicate that the school met its targets in English and science and exceeded them in the percentage gaining Level 5. The results at Level 5 are likely to be significantly above the national average. Mathematics results are not available but work seen indicates that standards in mathematics are above average. The school has worked hard and successfully to rectify the dip in English results by improving writing skills across the school. It has also ensured that higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately.

Pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Overall progress is good although the rate of progress is not even across the school. In classes where progress suddenly accelerates, teachers are building on secure foundations where progress was at least in line with expectations. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress against their targets as do pupils learning English as an additional language because of the good quality of support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well as young people, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The school equips pupils with many skills that prepare them well for later life. They respect and care for others, and take a lively and curious interest in the wider world. Pupils become responsible members of the school community by acting as 'buddies' or 'play leaders'. They contribute to the wider community by taking part in festivals and performances beyond school. Classes take the initiative in fund raising to 'adopt' a zoo animal.

Pupils are friendly, polite and cooperative. Behaviour is good overall. The behaviour of most pupils is generally excellent, in and out of lessons. Disruptive behaviour by a few pupils, which has been a cause of concern for some parents, is managed well to minimise the impact on other pupils. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and their knowledge of nutrition is extended by growing fruit and vegetables. Plans are in hand to improve school dinners to give more scope for healthy eating. Pupils know the importance of exercise and have many opportunities to take part in fitness activities. Pupils learn to keep safe without being timid. They appreciate their cycling proficiency training on local roads that teaches them how to deal with traffic.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality teaching. This leads to effective learning and good progress through the school as a whole. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan well, building on what pupils already know. Introductions to lessons occasionally lack pace and variety. In many lessons, teaching is lively and creative, setting learning in context, as when pupils learnt about ratio and proportion through following recipes. Work is adapted for pupils of different abilities, particularly in English and mathematics, and learning support assistants give well-targeted support. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, although marking is not always followed up. Pupils' self-assessment is at an early stage of development. Targets are used to help pupils identify what they need to do in order to improve their work. These are sometimes too complicated, or too general, to be helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, providing appropriate depth and breadth in all subjects, including French. Currently the curriculum is focused more on content than skills. The school is now working to enrich its curriculum further by planning more use of skills, for example in writing and information and communication technology, within themes that link different areas of learning. Sets and support groups are organised effectively to maximise learning.

The school extends the opportunities it provides for more able pupils through work with local secondary schools. Work in lessons is enriched by visits and visitors that enliven learning, deepen pupils' knowledge and spark their curiosity. Residential visits in Years 5 and 6 extend learning in many areas. Members of staff enthusiastically contribute to an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. These are popular and broaden pupils' interests and skills. Pupils take great pride in their many and various sporting achievements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Members of staff know the pupils well and give particularly strong pastoral support. The majority of parents are supportive of the school. There are a few parents who are concerned with the way the school manages the behaviour of some pupils. The school has not yet managed to assuage these parents' concerns although these pupils have behaviour support plans. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well because parents, pupils and staff are all clear on how to improve their learning. There are extensive links with outside specialist agencies and other schools to provide pupils with additional support or challenge. The school is safety conscious and meets safeguarding requirements. It has methodical systems to ensure medical needs are met. The school has very good assessment systems in place to track pupils' progress. Teachers generally use this information well in their planning but specific support to meet individual needs could be honed further, particularly in foundation subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior leadership team, including the headteacher, is relatively fresh in post and some initiatives have not yet had time to become embedded across the school. They are enthusiastic and committed in their approach. The headteacher has a sustained, clear focus on standards and monitors teaching very effectively. The school improvement plan is detailed. It lacks, however, clear success criteria. Governors are supportive. They bring a good range of personal and professional skills to the school, participate in training, are well informed and are increasingly prepared to question the school. Performance management is in place across the school and includes, for teachers, accountability for the progress of their class.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

4 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Perryfields Junior School, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 7PP

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. Particular thanks to those pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to us. Your contributions were very valuable. We agree with Mrs Cowie that this is a good school. You are clearly proud of your school and enjoy it because you 'learn in a fun way'. Mrs Cowie is also clearly very proud of all her pupils because she described you as being 'fantastic'.

You make good progress during your time in the school and standards by the end of Year 6 are above average. You told us that you feel safe in school. It was good to hear that you felt very confident that you could approach a member of staff if you had a problem and that Mrs Cowie would solve any problems that might arise. We think that most of you behave very well most of the time although there are a small number of you who find this difficult. The school is helping you to develop well as young people. You take seriously the opportunities that you have to contribute to the school community. You clearly enjoy the work because teachers make it interesting and often fun. Teachers track your progress carefully and use this information well to give additional help when it is needed. You are not always clear about your targets and how to improve your work and we have asked Mrs Cowie to look at this. You clearly get a lot out of the residential trips, which sound very exciting, and enjoy all the clubs and activities that the school provides.

We think Mrs Cowie leads the school very well and that all staff work together effectively as a team on your behalf. We have suggested the school makes the targets for school improvement planning clearer.

The school is clearly building on its strengths and improving. You can help by making sure you know what to do in order to reach your targets. We wish you all well in your future school careers.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector