



# Hexton Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117112  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290723  
**Inspection dates** 10–11 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Helen Ranger

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Hexton
<b>School category</b>	Community		Hitchin
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Hertfordshire SG5 3JL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 881248
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	51	<b>Fax number</b>	01582 881248
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Simon Gee
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jeni Houghton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 10–11 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 290723
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector over two days.

## Description of the school

This small school is situated on the border between Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire and caters for pupils from both counties. Some pupils leave at the end of Year 4 to join the Bedfordshire middle school system and some transfer to independent schools. While most pupils are from White British backgrounds, 16% currently come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. No pupil is at an early stage of learning to speak English. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils' favourable socio-economic backgrounds are reflected in low levels of free school meals.

A new teacher joined the school at the start of last term. Also, at the time of the inspection, a temporary headteacher had been in post only two days, having been appointed at very short notice. She is the headteacher of another nearby primary school and is managing both schools this term.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some important good features and some areas for further improvement. This is also the school's own judgement of its current effectiveness. Of particular note is pupils' personal development which is consistently good throughout the school. Pupils' behaviour is often exemplary. They really enjoy school and grow into polite, caring and mature young people who are a credit to their families and the school. They are developing a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. Pupils' achievement has been satisfactory and they have reached broadly average standards by Year 2 and Year 6. The main weakness has been in writing and boys have not done as well as girls. The school is aware of these issues and is taking appropriate action which is beginning to raise standards.

The school's development plans give a clear summary of its strengths and areas for improvement based on accurate self-evaluation over the past year. The action that has been taken has started to have a positive effect on developing provision. Initiatives are ensuring that pupils now make faster progress. The quality of teaching with the new staff team is good. This includes teaching of Reception children who make a good start in Class 1. In all age groups, a good curriculum provides a wide range of interesting experiences for pupils. Much has been done recently to improve the arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Systems are now beginning to ensure that more information about individuals' achievements is available to teachers. The school has work to do to check that this information is as accurate as possible and is used regularly by the staff to support their lesson planning and improve further the rate of pupils' progress. Pupils are not as involved in assessing and improving their own performance as they might be. As a result of this and the relative newness of the assessment systems, while the pastoral care given to pupils is of high quality, their academic support and guidance is no better than satisfactory at present.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with significant good elements. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The new acting headteacher is getting to know the school extremely quickly and has already started to build on the school's recent achievements. Parents' and pupils' views of the school are highly positive. The governors are active and well informed and are working closely with senior staff to raise standards. However, the teaching staff are either new to the school or lack experience in analysing overall standards and in monitoring the quality of teaching and the curriculum. They are being supported well in improving their management skills by the acting headteacher and local authority advisers. The school's most recent track record shows successful action in important areas, such as in appointing staff and in starting to develop the ways pupils' performance is analysed so that standards rise. These features indicate a sound capacity to ensure the school improves further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the plans to raise standards in writing are effective and meet the needs of boys and girls equally well.

- Ensure that teachers' assessments of pupils' achievement are accurate and are analysed regularly to check that pupils are making good progress.
- Develop class teachers' ability to monitor and improve standards, teaching and the curriculum across all subjects.
- Involve pupils more in assessing how well they are doing and how they can improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Children join the school in Reception with skills that are wide ranging but generally typical of the age group. The school's assessments over the last few years indicate that children's early achievements have been satisfactory. The very small number in Reception this year have settled well and have made good progress in their short time in school because they are being taught well.

Since the last inspection, standards by Year 2 have been broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress has been mostly satisfactory, although in 2006 standards in writing were low, indicating pupils made inadequate progress. In the 2006 tests for Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, results were in line with the national averages. For the past two years, pupils in Year 6 have made satisfactory progress compared with the standards they reached in Year 2. The main weakness in this age group is again in writing standards. The school's new systems for tracking pupils' progress indicate that the action focused on improving teaching and writing standards is bearing fruit.

Pupils from all backgrounds now have made at least satisfactory progress during their time in school, and this school year the progress of many has accelerated. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to their classmates and do especially well in activities where they are given additional adult help. Standards are good in music.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development is a significant strength. They attend regularly, are attentive in class, keen to learn and respectful to their peers. The older pupils support younger ones well. Their behaviour in the playground and in assembly during the inspection was exceptionally good. Their good attitudes to learning enable them to take advantage of the improving teaching. They contribute well to the school and village community. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously. Councillors, for example, put forward ideas for fundraising such as selling the apples they have helped to grow, and pupils have contributed ideas for improving the decor of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although the curriculum gives them more limited opportunities to learn about the cultural diversity of modern Britain. The combination of their sound and improving academic progress and good social skills provides an effective foundation for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are currently good. This is the main reason that pupils' progress is improving this year. Teachers establish very good relationships with pupils. A good focus on practical tasks in all three classes engages pupils' interest and keeps them motivated. Teachers, the nursery nurse and the teaching assistants work well together. Their joint planning means that activities generally match the needs of the wide range of age and ability in each class. Staff have started to use the new assessment systems well and this is giving them more detailed information on pupils and enabling them to plan activities that build effectively on previous learning. For example, pupils' writing is now assessed in greater detail to gauge each individual's progress and determine the next steps they need to take. Some teachers are inexperienced in assessing National Curriculum standards but are being supported well to improve these skills.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

A recent reorganisation of the classes has resulted in a revised and updated curriculum. The curriculum is tailored well to the needs of the mixed age classes and has contributed to pupils' improving progress. This change includes the youngest children, for whom both indoor and outdoor activities are planned well. Numerous relevant links are made between subjects and these are making learning interesting and meaningful for pupils. For a school of this size, the curriculum is enhanced well by a good range of lunchtime activities, after school clubs, special events and visits. Pupils speak enthusiastically of the residential stays in particular. Useful contacts are being forged with local secondary schools to provide opportunities in technology and sport. These are valuable, partly because the school does not have enough space for indoor physical education. Space is also limited for the youngest pupils.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school gives effective attention to pupils' health and safety. The pastoral care of pupils is good and is rightly valued by pupils and their parents. The good supervision at lunchtimes is typical. The school works well with outside agencies to provide specialist support as needed for pupils with learning difficulties. Pupils' academic support and guidance are improving but are not as strong as their personal care. Teachers are not yet using assessment information to set and review targets for improvement with all pupils as effectively as they could, for example, across the full range of key literacy and numeracy skills. The quality of written comments on pupils' work is inconsistent and pupils are not involved enough in establishing how they will improve their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's information on its pupils' performance indicates that leadership and management have had a satisfactory impact on pupils' achievements in recent years, but there are clear signs that this is improving. The acting headteacher is already continuing to implement good existing initiatives for development, with a clear sighted determination to raise standards and improve provision further. The school has retained the confidence and support of parents who work closely with staff for the benefit of the children. The governing body is well informed and active, and led well by the chair of governors. Governors play an effective role in many school initiatives and help to promote good links with the wider community. The school has identified for itself that a weakness in its leadership and management has been in how far the class teachers in their subject leadership roles have been able to monitor and improve teaching and the curriculum to raise standards. They are now being trained to make a greater contribution to how the school develops by analysing the quality of current provision more effectively.

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## Inspection judgements

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

12 January 2007

Dear Children

Hexton Junior Mixed and Infant School, Hexton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3JL

Thank you for your welcome when I visited your school. This letter is to tell you some of the most important things I discovered during my visit.

One of the best things about your school is how much you enjoy your education and value the friendships you make. I was very impressed with how you behave in your lessons, in the playground and in assembly. You are good listeners and show respect to the adults and children you work with. I found that your school is improving how well you learn. Your teachers are trying to help you get better at writing in particular. You can help by always trying your best. Sometimes girls have different interests from boys and may learn in different ways. I have asked your teachers to check that boys and girls do equally well in their work.

The school gives you lots of interesting activities. You told me how much you enjoy practical lessons, especially in science, and all the visits you make. I hope the pantomime trip went well. The adults care a lot about how you are feeling and help you with any problems. They have started to use new ways to check how well you are doing with your work and I want them to continue to do this. I have also asked them to try to involve you more in discussing how well you are doing. Some of you told me about your literacy targets and I think the teachers could do even more to help you understand and meet targets like those.

Mrs Houghton has only been with you a short time but she is already finding out a great deal about your school. She is working with the staff and governors to make sure you do well. I would like all the teachers to have the chance to check that all subjects are taught well and that you are all making good progress as you move through the school.

I hope you keep enjoying school and all it offers you.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Ranger Lead Inspector