



Hunsdon Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117117
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290727
Inspection dates 13–14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Ms. Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Community		Hunsdon, Hunsdon
Age range of pupils	4–11		Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 8NT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01279842644
Number on roll (school)	94	Fax number	01279841197
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr.R Osterley
		Headteacher	Mrs. J McGregor
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils join this small village school with broadly average attainment and come from mixed social backgrounds. Fewer pupils have learning difficulties or are eligible for free school meals than in most other schools. A small number of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage.

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 that is deservedly popular with pupils and parents. Parents believe that the headteacher is 'a credit to the school' and 'genuinely wants what is best for all the children'. Her outstanding interpersonal skills have enabled her to establish a very strong partnership between staff, governors and parents and many members of the local community, so that they all work together to the benefit of the pupils. This, particularly, has had a really positive effect on how pupils are cared for and on their personal development, which is outstanding. Pupils learn and grow in a lovely atmosphere, which is both relaxed and purposeful, and have outstanding relationships with each other and with the staff. Children get off to a wonderful start in the Nursery and Reception class, because the teacher and nursery nurse combine high expectations with great sensitivity to the feelings and needs of individual children. Throughout the school, all the adults do their best to make sure pupils know that they matter. Pupils say that school is fun and talk with enthusiasm about all the opportunities provided. Parents express a high level of satisfaction and particularly appreciate the fact that their children are happy and enjoy school so much. Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards because teaching is good overall and the curriculum is matched well to their interests. The amount of support they receive from experienced teaching assistants and from members of the local community, who regularly help in the classroom, also contributes significantly to the progress that they make personally and academically. Teachers have good subject knowledge, use questioning well to deepen pupils' thinking and involve parents as active partners in their children's learning. They are usually clear about what they expect pupils to learn, and take into account at least what each year group in the class should achieve. However, they do not always communicate this to pupils in enough detail or get them to think sufficiently about how much they have learned in each lesson. Occasionally, when expectations are not made clear enough, a few boys in Years 1 to 6 behave inappropriately. In Years 1 and 2, although teaching is satisfactory overall, work does not always build well enough on what pupils already know and there are weaknesses, at times, in classroom organisation. The school is led and managed well. The headteacher sets an outstanding example in the way she cares for and about the pupils, always listening and responsive to the needs of every member of the school community. Staff morale is high, teamwork is strong between the teachers and teaching assistants, and all the staff are dedicated to improving the school. Management systems are outstanding in promoting the care and personal development of pupils and good in ensuring their academic achievement. Teachers' work is checked reasonably often but there is not always enough emphasis on what is, and is not, working in the classroom. The finer details of how teachers communicate expectations to pupils, and what those expectations are, do not receive as much attention as they should.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the school as a whole, especially by improving the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the way teachers communicate to pupils exactly what they expect them to learn and how they

could get the best out of the tasks they are given, how they should behave in individual lessons, and involve them more in evaluating their own learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Nursery and Reception class make outstanding progress in their communication and language skills and in their personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress in other areas. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science in Years 1 and 2 and good progress in Years 3 to 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and those of minority ethnic heritage achieve well. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) where attainment is broadly average, and outstanding in art, where pupils of all ages produce attractive, imaginative and technically skilled work. Pupils reached above average standards in English, mathematics and science in the recent national tests in Years 2 and 6. Although test results have varied somewhat from year to year, being sometimes average and at other times above average, this variation is largely explained by the small numbers in each year group.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is a happy school where pupils say that learning is fun and pupils outstandingly enjoy coming to school. They describe the school as 'a lovely place to be' and 'like a second family'. They make friends easily and look out for one another. One pupil commented on how his 'feel good moments' have been 'all the time', saying 'there hasn't been a moment that I have felt sad'. Another said that he would 'recommend the school to anyone'. Older pupils support younger ones and pupils readily take responsibility, for instance, contributing their ideas for the development of the wild garden and for making the nutritious lunches even more appealing. Pupils are developing an exceptionally clear understanding of how to achieve a healthy lifestyle and the importance of staying safe. Pupils are aware of moral issues, care about the environment and show respect for others. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding, and they gain skills that should stand them in good stead in the future. They are polite, thoughtful, lively and responsive. Behaviour is good and outstanding in the Nursery and Reception class. Most pupils behave exceptionally well, although there is occasionally some unhelpful behaviour from a few boys in Years 1 to 6.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Some lessons are outstanding in the Nursery and Reception class, with excellent teamwork between the teacher and nursery nurse. There are outstanding features within teaching in the Year 3 and the Year 4 classes. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, with some shortcomings, and good in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' attainment is checked and recorded appropriately in English, mathematics and science. The way pupils' progress is recorded is developing satisfactorily in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve well but also to enjoy learning. It has been brought to life by special events such as a Caribbean day, Victorian school day, by work on the environment, by the range of visitors who come into the school and through educational visits. The recently developed wild garden - created and funded by parents and the local community - is beginning to enrich the curriculum further and has the potential to make a magical contribution to pupils' learning and development. The school promotes pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well overall and their ICT skills satisfactorily. There is more work to be done to bring ICT up to the level of English, mathematics and science, but the school is clear about what else needs to be done and has made substantial improvement in this area since the last inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. The school provides outstanding personal care for its pupils. Although its academic support and guidance is good, teachers do not always share enough information with pupils about what they need to do to get the most out of learning. Parents appreciate the way staff 'go the extra mile' in helping pupils and their families. They like the very 'hands-on' approach of the headteacher, who is always ready to listen to pupils' or parents' concerns. The clear commitment to encouraging pupils to treat others with utmost kindness ensures that pupils are generally free from any bullying. Nevertheless the current policy does not always set out procedures clearly enough, although pupils say they are confident that there is always someone they could talk to. The school carefully identifies the needs of individual pupils with learning difficulties, working very closely with external agencies and therapists to support them. It has been extremely successful in including the small number of minority ethnic pupils who have joined the school, and is very careful to safeguard its pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's leadership is exceptionally effective in ensuring that pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and she is supported extremely well in this by the staff. Due to the determination and skill of the headteacher, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further. The school is accurate in judging its effectiveness, and staff with responsibilities make a good contribution to pupils' academic achievement. There are clear systems for identifying where pupils are not doing as well as they could, and effective action is taken to support those who need extra help. However, systems for ensuring consistency of teaching across the school are not always rigorous enough. The governing body makes a good contribution to the school. Governors are very supportive and are kept well informed about what is happening by the headteacher. They undertake some visits to school but there is scope to strengthen the way they gather information for themselves.

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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?	2
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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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.

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

Dear Pupils Hunsdon JMI School, High Street, Hunsdon, Ware. Hertfordshire. SG12 8NT Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I enjoyed my visit very much, and now I am writing to tell you what I found out about the school. This is a good school that is helping you to make good progress with your work so that you reach standards that are above average. This is because teaching is good, you get a lot of support from the teaching assistants and from other people who help in the classroom, and because learning is made interesting for you. Many of you said how much fun you have at school and how you find it a lovely place to be. I could see exactly why you feel that. It is a happy place where people care about one another and the staff do everything they can to help you to grow into confident, thoughtful people. As a result, you are all making outstanding progress in your personal development. The school is led and managed well, and the headteacher and governors are keen to make the school even better. I have asked them to do this by making sure that: - Teaching is always as good as it could be. - Getting teachers to tell you exactly what they want you to learn from the things they give you to do, and then involve you in deciding how well you have done at the end of each lesson. A few of the boys could help the teachers by making sure that they always behave well. Yours sincerely Margaret Goodchild Lead Inspector