



Wymondley Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117177
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290747
Inspection date 8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Anne Kounnou

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Siccut Road
School category	Community		Little Wymondley, Hitchin
Age range of pupils	4-11		Hertfordshire SG4 7HN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01438354583
Number on roll (school)	112	Fax number	01438 727597
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Paul Watts
		Headteacher	Mrs Alison Emmerson
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over one day.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school serving a rural area of economic advantage. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average. All the pupils are fluent in speaking English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. Attainment on entry to the school varies widely from year to year and is broadly similar to the expected levels. There has been a lot of staff changes in the last two years and a new headteacher has joined the school since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for all the pupils and is improving under the good leadership of the headteacher. Leadership and management, value for money and school-self-evaluation are all satisfactory. The systems for evaluating the school, while adequate, are not fully effective because school leaders tend to concentrate on looking at what the school is doing, rather than checking what difference this makes for the pupils. Nonetheless, the determination of the leadership team to raise standards has led to an improvement in pupils' achievement this year. Achievement is now satisfactory in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Standards are below average in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, but pupils are making broadly satisfactory progress.

The quality of education in the Foundation Stage is good and children in the Reception class make good progress. Challenging activities help them to develop important thinking skills as well as learning the basic skills they will need as they move into Year 1. They are often entranced by the activities provided for them, concentrating really well and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Pupils are happy at school and say that lessons are fun, 'our teacher is really funny' they giggled. The school listened to pupils' views and adapted the satisfactory curriculum to make it more interesting for them. This has not been completely successful because there is not always enough challenge in the work, especially for the most able. Pupils are not making enough progress in writing, mainly because they do not know exactly what they need to do to improve their work. In addition, they do not have enough challenging opportunities to develop their writing skills in lessons across the curriculum. Although the school provides good care, guidance and support for pupils, some are not clear how they can reach the next steps in learning. For example, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities cannot always read or understand their special targets. Detailed tracking of how well all pupils are doing means that those who fall behind are identified and supported at an early stage. This has led to an improvement in pupils' progress, most are on course to reach challenging targets later in the year. Teaching assistants work particularly well under the guidance of the senior teaching assistant, helping pupils to catch up in small groups.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing standards across the school and ensure that there are opportunities for all pupils to develop their writing skills at a suitable level across the curriculum.
- Ensure that all pupils know how to reach the next steps in learning so that they are able to reach higher standards
- Ensure regular review of the schools' strategies for evaluating improvements in pupils' academic and personal skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and has improved recently. This is because senior staff keep a close eye on how well each pupil is doing and take action to help any who are in danger of falling behind. In most years, standards have been below average at the end of Year 6, but were exceptionally low in 2006. However, the very small number of pupils in each year group means that such comparisons are not completely reliable. Standards can change from year to year. Present standards in Year 6 are lower than expected but in Year 2, they are average. However, pupils are not doing well in writing. They do not have enough opportunities to develop writing skills at a suitable level in work across the curriculum. This, together with the lack of clear guidance for pupils about how to improve their writing, is limiting their progress. In the Reception class children achieve well and a good proportion reach levels above those expected for their age.

Girls have not achieved as well as boys over the last few years. The school has worked successfully to address this so that girls now make satisfactory progress. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in small groups, particularly in learning basic skills. However, a lack of clarity in setting learning targets for this group hinders their progress, which is satisfactory overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average. Pupils say they feel very safe, as bullying is rare and always dealt with straight away. The school council makes a lot of decisions about what happens in school. For example, they have ensured that everyone has a water bottle in class so that they can drink regularly throughout the day. This contributes well to pupils' good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. If pupils fall out with one another at break times, special 'peer mediators' are called upon to help sort it out rather than going to adults, who are only referred to when pupils cannot resolve an issue. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and some of the oldest run their own chess and drama clubs. These skills of working together, combined with improving literacy, numeracy, and information and technology skills, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but vary widely across the school. In the Reception class children have a lot of fun and make good progress because they are

encouraged to think about their learning really well. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. As a result pupils behave well in lessons because they want to please their teachers. Pupils' work is assessed regularly so that teachers know how well each one is doing. At the moment this information is not used effectively to ensure that pupils work at suitably challenging activities in lessons. Teachers think carefully about what they want pupils to learn in their lessons, but do not always make sure that this will be challenging enough for the most able. Targets for learning are clearly displayed in classrooms alongside examples of best practice for children to use when they check their own and each other's work. Teachers mark pupils work regularly and are often encouraging, but do not usually explain why the work is good or how it could be even better, and this limits the rate of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils say 'we get to do lots of fun stuff'. All around the school colourful displays of interesting work reflect pupils' enjoyment of the varied curriculum. Recent improvements, some suggested by the pupils, mean that teachers frequently link different subjects to make learning more interesting. Pupils appreciate the good range of extra activities such as clubs and visits. Good links with a local secondary school expand mathematical opportunities for more able pupils, who benefit from a 'master class'. The curriculum is satisfactory, but too often pupils work at the same activities regardless of their differing abilities. Opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills at the right level in lessons across the curriculum are often missed because they are not carefully planned.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is good and pastoral care is particularly strong. The Reception class teacher visits all the children before they start school to help them settle in really quickly. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet statutory requirements. Pupils say 'everyone is really kind to each other, the adults really look after you and help you if you get stuck'. Staff carefully track pupils' progress and provide good support to help them learn more effectively. School leaders set challenging targets for pupils but at the moment pupils are not fully familiar with these. They know where to find targets for the class but are not clear about what they need to do to improve their own work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership and is driving forward improvement in the school with a passion. As a result, parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. A new and effective leadership team is drawn from both teaching and non-teaching staff. This broadens the range of expertise available and overcomes the difficulties of shared staff responsibilities in a small school. Governance is good and

supports the school well, for example all governors are fully involved in checking how well the school is doing.

Leadership and management are satisfactory because the hard work and determination have not resulted in good progress for pupils. Some developments are new and have not yet had an impact on the standards that pupils reach. A wide range of strategies is in place to check school effectiveness. For example, the headteacher has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Nevertheless, the systems for school self-evaluation are not always sufficiently rigorous, so that school leaders are not fully aware which of the school's policies are most or least effective in raising standards. At the moment, school leaders mainly check what is provided, rather than how well this helps pupils to learn. This leads to some inaccurate judgements that limit the capacity for further improvement. Currently this is satisfactory despite the determination to raise standards.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	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	3
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

9 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Wymondley Junior Mixed and Infant School, Sicut Road, Little Wymondley, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 7HN

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. Your school is satisfactory and it is improving because the leadership team and the governors are working hard to help you make better progress. You make satisfactory progress in most of your lessons.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school:

- The headteacher leads the school well and helps the staff and governors to steadily improve your school.
- You get to make a lot of decisions about what happens in school.
- You sort out your own problems on the playground.
- You behave really well because you enjoy the work and have a lot of fun.
- The teachers look after you well.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress because the teacher makes them think really hard.

These are the things that we think could be better:

- You are not making enough progress with your writing.
- You do not know exactly what you need to do to make your work better.
- When school leaders check to find out how well the school is doing they don't always ask you if you are finding things easier and making better progress.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.

Yours faithfully

Liz Kounnou

Lead Inspector