

Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117292
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	290785
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Milton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dilys Clark
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Butterworth
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001
School address	Wisden Road Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 5JD
Telephone number	01438314189
Fax number	01438314189

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery School has one class in each year group, and is average in size. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a few from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds are mostly average, but some are disadvantaged. The school has Healthy Schools Status; the Quality Mark for Basic Skills; the Hertfordshire Quality Standard for the Foundation Stage and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Trotts Hill is a very effective school. It has many outstanding features and a few areas where improvement is needed. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has helped to create a school committed to improving pupils' achievement and personal development. All parents are very supportive of the school and one wrote that the school 'is improving constantly, making changes where and when necessary'.

Children enter the school with standards that are below those expected, especially in communication, language and literacy. They make very good progress during the Foundation Stage where the provision is particularly good. During Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress and reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Good progress continues during Key Stage 2 and, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards are also high in art, music and physical education.

Pupils make good progress because teaching and learning are always at least good with outstanding teaching in about one third of lessons. Teaching is having a full impact on pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being and helps them really enjoy school and achieve well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely good. There is some excellent use of assessment to help pupils learn as much as they can, but this is not yet done consistently in all classes. The outstanding curriculum also contributes to pupils' good progress, as work is very well matched to the learning needs of different groups of pupils, and very good use is made of specialist teachers for art and design, music, physical education (PE), dance and drama. The broad, well planned curriculum for physical education contributes strongly to pupils' healthy lifestyles.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. As another parent wrote, 'The teachers and staff are superb and go out of their way to help and support parents and pupils.' Pupils feel very safe. The school makes good use of its thorough system for tracking the progress of each pupil. There is outstanding provision for those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and therefore they make very good progress.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school has made good improvements since its last inspection. It evaluates its performance very effectively and makes very good use of evaluations by external agencies. Once weaknesses are identified, then action is taken to address them. For example, shortcomings in provision for gifted and talented pupils were identified earlier this year and were quickly remedied. Because of its accurate, rigorous self-evaluation and its committed staff with high professional standards, the school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement. Staff carry out their leadership responsibilities very effectively; they know the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of responsibility. The school improvement plan is helping the school to become even more effective, although it does not focus explicitly enough on improving pupils' achievement. Governors are well informed about the work of the school and carry out their responsibilities well.

The school has managed its budget well to provide resources for planned improvements to the Foundation Stage's accommodation. It gives very good value for money. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion by helping each pupil to achieve well, working closely with parents and giving pupils good opportunities for involvement in the wider community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment is used consistently well to help all pupils to achieve their best.
- Develop the school improvement plan so that it focuses more sharply on pupils' standards and achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When pupils enter the Nursery, their overall standards are below average. They make very good progress during the Foundation Stage because of the very good teaching that uses assessment to match work to the learning needs of individual children. Pupils continue to make good progress during Key Stage 1, and their standards in reading, writing and mathematics match national averages by the end of Year 2. This good progress continues during Key Stage 2 and, at the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. A few pupils are making outstanding progress. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make very good progress because they are quickly identified. There is a very good range of provision to meet particular learning and behavioural needs, and a very wide range of external specialist support is used. The school sets challenging targets for its results at the end of Year 6, and these were achieved in 2006.

In music, standards in singing and instrumental work are high, and include very good singing in two-part harmony. Pupils produce a wide range of high quality art and design work, using a variety of media, including vibrant mixed-media pictures inspired by the work of Hockney. In PE, standards are high because of the specialist coaching, good teaching and a wide range of sporting opportunities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

In the Foundation Stage, children make excellent progress with their personal, social and emotional development. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' outstanding personal development is reflected in their enthusiasm for and enjoyment of learning. Their attendance is above average. They are proud of their school. There is a very strong sense of community and, one parent wrote, 'It is very much a family school.' In an inspiring assembly when the achievements of many pupils and teaching assistants were celebrated, the other pupils enjoyed immensely the successes of those rewarded.

Behaviour and relationships are excellent. Isolated instances of bullying are quickly resolved. Pupils are thoughtful and considerate. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, such as the school council, play leaders and peer mediators. As part of a whole-school 'Where is God?' day, older pupils wrote thoughtful poems which often referred to the problem of suffering. Through several subjects, pupils learn a good deal about other cultures. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe. Pupils' good levels of basic skills and their outstanding personal development prepare them very well for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are always at least good, with outstanding teaching in about one third of lessons. Pupils enjoy their lessons. There are common strengths of all teaching, including effective class management and work that is well matched to pupils' differing learning needs. There are interesting activities, such as acting out a migration caused by a volcanic eruption, and effective use of teaching assistants. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively, for example, to make sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and to show video clips. In some classes there is outstanding use of marking to help pupils understand what they have achieved and how they can improve their work. In an excellent English lesson, the calm, precise teaching and thought-provoking questioning made very effective use of a range of stimulating resources and activities. Therefore the pupils learnt a very great deal as they planned pieces of journalistic writing about a natural hazard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum provides a rich, broad and stimulating range of learning activities that pupils enjoy, with particular strengths in art and design, music and physical education. The school is brimming with stimulating displays. The school's provision for its different groups of learners is excellent because of consistently good teaching and thorough assessment and target setting. The exciting Foundation Stage curriculum promotes very effective learning because it gives a good balance between child selected and adult directed activities in a stimulating environment. The well planned programme for personal, health, social and citizenship education makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Links with local secondary schools enhance the curriculum. Also, the curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of lunchtime and after school activities, and many pupils take part in these. Pupils make very good contributions to the local community, for example by taking part in music festivals and sports tournaments, and to the school's community through, for example, the lunchtime reading club and the school council.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that all pupils are cared for exceptionally well, through the strong support provided in classes and the several nurture groups. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is extensive, well planned and very effective. Clear behaviour procedures give pupils security and create a calm atmosphere in which they can learn confidently. All health and safety requirements are met. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place and meet requirements. The school ensures that pupils' views have a real part in the school's decision making. The school has excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress. This information is used very effectively to identify any underachievement and to provide pupils with challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding headteacher has developed a staff team which has high professional standards and a strong commitment to improving the personal development and academic progress of all pupils. Monitoring and evaluation involve all stakeholders and are rigorous and accurate. The outcomes of evaluations are followed up by actions to improve the school's provision. This process has been particularly effective in improving pupils' personal development and well-being, and in the provision for the curriculum and care, support and guidance. The headteacher gives other staff substantial responsibilities and there is outstanding leadership for other areas of the school's work, including provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, physical education and assessment. The school's commitment to the progress of every child is evident in its everyday life. The school has excellent links with parents and outside agencies and, for example, local companies which have sponsored the beautifully designed sensory garden. Governors regularly visit the school and share their monitoring reports with the governing body.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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?	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	1
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	1
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?	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.

Annex A

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	2
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	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

18 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Trotts Hill Primary and Nursery School, Stevenage, SG1 5JD

Mrs Griffiths and I really enjoyed visiting your school last week and meeting you, Mrs Butterworth, the staff and the chair of the governing body. We particularly enjoyed the achievement assembly, your wonderful singing and your beautiful pictures around the school. It was interesting to hear from you that you like school, feel safe and secure, enjoy your lessons and find the teachers kind and caring. You know how well you are doing with your work, and many of you find the comments that teachers make in their marking helpful.

The main findings of the inspection.

- Mrs Butterworth and the staff run the school really well.
- Teaching is always at least good in lessons and so you make good progress with your learning.
- You are given lots of interesting activities to help you learn, and these are often fun.
- You get on really well with other pupils and with your teachers and the support staff.
- You are keen to learn as much as you can and to play your part in making Trotts Hill a really good school.
- The staff do all they can to care for you and help you with any problems or difficulties you face.

Mrs Butterworth and the staff know what to do to make the school even better. The main thing they need to do is to continue to look carefully at what the school does to help you learn and make the small improvements needed to help you learn even more.

You can help the school to get even better by continuing with your excellent behaviour and your enthusiasm to do your best work, and by thinking carefully about how you can improve your work even more.

With best wishes for the rest of term and for the summer holiday

Mike Milton

Lead Inspector