



John Hellins Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121851
Local Authority Northamptonshire
Inspection number 292240
Inspection date 6 February 2007
Reporting inspector Alison Grainger

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Brownswood Drive
School category	Community		Potterspury
Age range of pupils	4-11		Towcester NN12 7PG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01908 542405
Number on roll (school)	113	Fax number	01908 542405
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Sheila Stockton
		Headteacher	Michael Langrish
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school draws most of its pupils from the relatively socially and economically advantaged village of Potterspury, although some travel from further afield. Most pupils are of White British heritage. No pupils from minority ethnic families are at an early stage of learning English. A below average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. On entry to the Reception Year, most children's attainment is at least at the level expected for their age.

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 doing outstandingly well in some significant areas. The provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is exceptional, as is the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils of all ages. The high priority given to pupils' personal welfare, as well as to their academic progress, results in pupils becoming very mature and responsible young people by the time they leave the school. The remarkably wide range of visits, visitors and clubs also contributes substantially to pupils' tremendous enjoyment of school and their enthusiasm for learning. Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. It is no wonder that parents are pleased with the school.

Pupils' academic achievement is good and standards are exceptionally high by the end of Year 6. Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Reception Year where provision is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is good from Year 1 onwards and it accelerates as they move into the upper years. Good teaching and a good curriculum are the main reasons for pupils doing well. The warm family environment, in which pupils feel valued and looked after, also contributes substantially to their academic progress. Pupils really appreciate all that the school offers them. They say, for example, that 'lessons are enjoyable and challenging' and that 'teachers are nice and comforting'.

The school has recognised the need to develop its provision for Reception children. Staff in the Reception class have many ideas for taking this area of the school forward. These include improving the opportunities for children to learn outdoors. There is already an appropriate balance between activities that children select for themselves and those that adults direct. However, there is not always a clear enough focus or sufficient challenge in the activities that children work on independently. Whilst teaching is good in other years, there are moments in lessons when not all pupils are challenged or involved fully.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has high aspirations for the school and provides an outstandingly clear educational direction. Teamwork among staff is strong and purposeful. Self-evaluation is rigorous and ensures that the school has the right priorities for development. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is well placed to become even better. Everyone is working hard to make this very effective school one that is outstanding in all respects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve opportunities for Reception children to learn outdoors and ensure that all activities that they work on independently have a clear focus and sufficient challenge.
- Ensure that all pupils are consistently involved and challenged in all parts of lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are exceptionally high and achievement is good. All groups of pupils achieve equally well. Children's progress in the Reception Year is satisfactory, maintaining their above average attainment on entry.

Standards in Years 2 and 6 represent good gains in relation to pupils' starting points. Assessments of pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2006 showed exceptionally high standards in reading and writing and above average standards in mathematics. The school is taking action, that is already proving effective, to raise the mathematics standards to the same level as those in reading and writing. In most recent years, pupils' results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 have been very high in English, mathematics and science.

Pupils also do well and achieve high standards across the wider range of their school work. These very good standards are evident by the end of Year 6 in subjects as diverse as information and communication technology (ICT), history and physical education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Children in the Reception Year settle in well and quickly gain confidence and independence. Almost all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous, friendly and considerate towards others. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in the attendance rate, which is significantly above the national average.

Pupils have a well-developed understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They know the importance of regular exercise, eating a balanced diet and of making sensible choices, for example, about smoking and alcohol. They are keenly aware of how to keep safe in school, such as during physical education lessons. They also know the importance of safe practices out of school, such as for road safety.

Through the School Council, and by undertaking responsibilities in classrooms and around the school, pupils make a significant contribution to the school community. They really care for each other and older pupils do much to look after younger ones. Pupils also make a substantial contribution to the wider community, for instance, through raising funds for charities and participation in village events. Pupils' excellent personal qualities and good academic progress result in them being well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is outstanding in Years 5 and 6, resulting in pupils making rapid progress. Expectations of the standards these older pupils are capable of attaining are very high. Pupils respond really well to the challenges they are set and say that 'the teacher lets us flow with our own ideas.' As a result, these older pupils are very independent and resourceful learners.

Across the school, there are many good features to the teaching. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn. They communicate the purpose of lessons to pupils so that they know what they are aiming to achieve. There is often good reinforcement of pupils' learning at the end of a lesson. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support groups, particularly those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

In Years 1 to 6, activities and support are nearly always well matched to pupils' needs. Even so, there are moments in lessons, particularly in the Reception Year and also in Years 1 to 4, when not all pupils are involved and challenged fully. There are occasions, for instance, when the more capable pupils mark time waiting for the next activity. Some pupils do not maintain complete involvement when a whole-class session is pitched at the same level for all of the class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is much that is outstanding about the curriculum. The enrichment of daily lessons through a wealth of clubs, including sports, visits and visitors, contributes a good deal to pupils' academic and personal development. One parent commenting on her child's involvement in two recent outings said, 'He came home on both occasions animated and buzzing with what he had seen and done.' A comprehensive personal, social and health education programme contributes much to pupils' awareness of healthy lifestyles.

Learning opportunities for pupils in Years 5 and 6 provide substantial challenge and enjoyment. All the required subjects are covered well in Years 1 to 4. Careful planning ensures that attention is given to each of the recommended areas of learning in the Reception Year. The school has plans to develop the outdoor environment and resources to rectify the present lack of real quality outdoor experiences. Activities that children select for themselves from a range provided do not always move learning on sufficiently. Their purpose is not always clear enough and the level of challenge is not varied sufficiently to meet children's differing needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Exceptionally strong attention is given to pupils' physical, emotional and academic needs. As pupils are quick to point out, the school is 'very caring'. They are sure that

they have an adult to whom they can turn should the need arise and know that any form of bullying is not tolerated. They also emphasise how well they are looked after if they feel unwell or need first aid. Such is the school's emphasis on pupils' well-being that all pupils in Years 5 and 6 have gained St John Ambulance first aid awards. Staff provide excellent examples for pupils in their relationships with others, which contribute much to pupils' caring attitudes. Child protection procedures and the necessary arrangements for safeguarding pupils are securely in place.

Academic guidance is good. From the start of the Reception Year, children's progress is monitored and clear targets are set to help each of them make the next steps in learning. Pupils are involved well in evaluating their performance and in identifying what they need to do next to make more effective progress. These systems work particularly well in Years 3 to 6.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. The headteacher has high expectations of the school's effectiveness and provides a very strong example for others. He is not only determined that staff should give of their best for pupils but also that they should be productive because they are happy in their work. The success of this is evident in the staff's view that they are part of a 'family'. They are really pleased to be in this school. Teamwork is effective in each classroom and in driving whole-school developments. This strong teamwork is supported by highly effective partnerships with parents and also with outside agencies such as those for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The deputy makes a substantial contribution to the school. This is evident, for example, in his leadership of ICT and physical education, where there is some cutting-edge practice. There is increasing involvement of other staff in evaluating and developing teaching and aspects of the curriculum. Governors are committed to the school and receive clear and accurate information from the headteacher. They have become more involved since the last inspection in checking the school's effectiveness and recognise the importance of sharpening this practice further.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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	1
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	1
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?	2
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.

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

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you and finding out about your school. I agree with you that your school is not only good but also that it does some things outstandingly well.

I saw that you like school a lot. You told me that this is because the adults are very caring and that they make lessons interesting and fun. The adults help you to settle well when you start at school and to become very mature and sensible young people. Because you behave very well, are friendly and caring towards others, you too help to make the school seem like a big family. You know a lot of important things about how to keep healthy and safe. Through your School Council, you are doing much to improve your school.

You make good progress during your time in school and reach high standards. This is because the teaching and curriculum are good. You have an exceptionally good range of activities additional to lessons, including many clubs, outings and visitors. The children in the Reception Year get off to a satisfactory start.

Your school is well led and managed. The adults are working well together to make sure that your school gets even better. You can see how successful they are, for example, in the developing work you are doing with computers. One of you told me that what you can do with the new laptops is 'revolutionary'.

There is something that the adults have already started to think hard about that I have asked them to work on. This is to improve the learning opportunities for Reception children, particularly outdoors, and to make sure that all activities are at the right level for them. I have asked the teachers to make sure that all of you are all challenged well in every moment of every lesson. Please keep working hard and being such pleasant young people.