

Knowsley Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105670
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308915
Inspection dates	15–16 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Onyon

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr D Heffernan
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Goodwin
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Stoneleigh Road Springhead Oldham Lancashire OL4 4BH
Telephone number	0161 6334433
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is larger than average and serves an area towards the eastern boundary of Oldham. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. A smaller than average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has gained the Activemark and Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Knowsley Junior provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. As a result of the clear vision offered by the headteacher it is showing clear signs of improvement. There are a number of good features, including the good quality of care, guidance and support offered to pupils. Pupils say that they like coming to school because they thoroughly enjoy lessons and the good range of curricular and additional activities such as sports and residential visits. Their attendance and standards of behaviour are good. Pupils have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle and know the benefits of sticking to a sensible diet and taking lots of exercise. Opportunities to take responsibility; for example, through the school council or as sports leaders, give pupils a voice and helps them develop exceptionally well the life skills they need to be part of a community. Parents have overwhelmingly positive views of the school.

From their varying starting points in Year 3, pupils achieve satisfactorily during their time in the school. By the end of Year 6 they reach broadly average standards in mathematics and science and above average standards in English. The school's tracking of pupils' progress indicates that the rate of progress is accelerating in Years 3 and 4. The better progress seen in English where standards show continuing improvement is because of the school's clear focus on the subject. This is not matched, however, in mathematics and science where improvement over time has been too slow. The school recognises that the rigorous focus on English may have caused other subjects to fall behind. It has begun to make better use of assessment data to try and meet pupils' needs more accurately and drive up standards in mathematics and science. However, it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers establish good relationships in classes and the better lessons engage pupils enthusiastically in their learning. However, there is inconsistent practice by teachers in the use of assessment and marking to ensure that pupils progress quickly enough; this is particularly the case in mathematics and science. The curriculum provides increasingly well-planned opportunities for pupils to apply basic skills, in a purposeful way, across other subjects.

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and direction. Her vision is clearly set out in the improvement plan and understood by the recently appointed leadership team and governors. New systems are in place to help raise achievement. There is now a clear focus on judging pupils' standards and progress. Senior leaders have clearly defined roles in the monitoring of standards and the quality of teaching, although it is too early to see the full impact of this new work. Subject leaders know the strengths and what needs to be done in their areas to increase the purpose and enjoyment of learning for pupils, although they do not have sufficient opportunities to observe teaching and offer advice and support to teachers to raise standards. Governors support the school satisfactorily and manage finances carefully to ensure satisfactory value for money. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance and demonstrate this in their self-evaluation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' progress in mathematics and science.
- Improve systems for subject leaders to monitor and evaluate standards and quality in their subjects.
- Improve the use of marking to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning, especially in mathematics and science.

A small proportion of the schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory, their progress in English is much stronger than in other subjects because this has been the major focus in the school. In 2007, the results in English at the end of Year 6 were above average with a significant proportion of pupils gaining higher levels than expected for their age. Progress in mathematics and science has not been sufficiently monitored and, consequently, standards in these subjects have fallen behind to an average level. Standards have varied in mathematics over the past four years and the school did not reach the targets set in 2007. Over time, standards in science have been broadly average but dipped below average in 2007. The school has begun to analyse strengths and weaknesses in mathematics and science and is now planning specific work for individuals and groups of pupils to address identified weaknesses. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their positive attitudes to learning. The school's Healthy School status recognises pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils respond very well where there are opportunities to take on additional responsibilities; for example, as sports leaders, encouraging positive play among younger pupils. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and contribute well to decisions concerning the running of the school. Pupils are confident that they are able to talk to an adult about any problems that may occur. A range of activities, including assemblies and class activities, effectively support pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, respect, care, and kindness are very obvious as pupils go about their work and play in school. Pupils make good progress overall in developing personal qualities that will prepare them well for becoming responsible young adults. However, the standard of their basic skills in mathematics is less strong than in English.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good; this encourages pupils to contribute and participate well. In the better lessons teachers know the subject well and understand how their pupils learn. In these lessons teachers ensure that pupils know what they are going to learn and so pupils are clear what they are aiming for. The better teaching also successfully links subjects in lessons, reinforcing pupils' learning and making it relevant to their needs and interests. Generally, teachers plan work that builds on what different pupils know and understand. However, in some lessons work is not well matched and some pupils are not challenged sufficiently. The quality of marking is variable. At its best, it tells pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

However, where marking is less informative, though praising what has been done well, it does not offer enough guidance for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils are well served by the good curriculum. The school's recent development of a curriculum that links subjects is having a positive impact on learning. Pupils' communication skills are further developed as all pupils learn a foreign language. Many pupils take advantage of the outstanding provision for sporting activities and a good number achieve recognition for their skills. The level of physical activity promotes pupils' fitness very well. There are very good opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence and social skills through taking part in high quality music and drama productions. A very good range of visits to places of educational interest and a wide range of visitors add interest and enjoyment to learning. Pupils learn how to keep safe and to be physically and mentally healthy. The recent successful 'Healthy School's Week' contributed well to this aspect.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's good level of care, guidance and support stems from a clear commitment from all staff to the well-being and achievement of pupils. The level of pastoral care is very good and the school meets all current requirements for safeguarding its pupils. The learning mentor offers outstanding support for pupils who at times experience difficulties in their lives. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. This is especially so because their individual learning plans focus well on their particular needs and they receive effective individual help. Pupils understand their targets and know that meeting them will take them on to the next steps in their learning. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'Targets are helpful because you don't really know what you're working for if you don't have targets.' However, inconsistencies in approaches to marking and feedback to pupils, especially in mathematics and science, slow down pupils' progress in these subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Improvement is gathering pace under the leadership of the headteacher. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. It is working well with the local infant school to develop robust approaches to monitoring and evaluation by all managers to help raise achievement. The rigour, which has contributed to success in English, is now beginning to be applied in other subjects. The recently formed leadership team is giving senior leaders responsibility for more robust management of staff's performance. It is helping to give a clearer overview of standards and quality of provision.

The systems for leaders to monitor and evaluate standards and the quality of provision in their subjects are at an early stage of development. Consequently, subject leaders do not have sufficient opportunities to observe classroom practice and offer challenge and support to teachers to raise standards. This is especially so in mathematics and science. While governance overall is satisfactory, procedures used by governors to hold the school to account and to check the impact of their decisions in terms of outcomes for pupils are underdeveloped.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	3
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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

Thank you very much for making the inspectors feel so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and watching you learn. We judge that your school has improved in many ways and that it is a satisfactory school that offers good support for your personal development and well-being. We were very impressed by the outstanding range of sports events you are involved in and the competitions you have won.

We can see that standards are getting better for all children. We were impressed by the way that you support and care for each other. You behave well, and you were all very polite and courteous to us. It was great to see you helping each other out, in the classrooms and outside in the playground where the 'sports leaders' help younger children.

This is your school so you have an important part to play in helping it to become even better! We would like you to make as much progress in mathematics and science as you do in English. The school can help by using the marking of your work to help you all understand what it is you need to do to improve. All the staff are keen to help you achieve your full potential and so we have asked that they monitor the quality of the different lessons you have.

We hope that you can build on all of the good things to make Knowsley Junior an even better place to be. We wish you all the best for the future.