

# Upperthong Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107680
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	309473
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jon Lovgreen

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Phil Clarke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Littlewood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Burnlee Road Holmfirth West Yorkshire HD9 2LE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01484 222488
<b>Fax number</b>	01484 222489

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: standards and achievement, pupils' personal development and well-being, and the school's capacity to improve. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work; interviews with senior members of staff and pupils; and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

Upperthong Junior and Infant School is smaller than average. Pupils come from a mixed catchment area but the proportion eligible for free school meals is below average. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but varies significantly between classes. The headteacher had been in post for two weeks at the time of the inspection, an acting headteacher having managed the school during the previous term. The school has gained Activemark Gold for its work in sport, Artsmark, and the National 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: 2

Upperthong is a good school with some outstanding aspects and an excellent capacity to improve further. It is held in high regard by parents, who value the commitment and teamwork of staff and the speed of its improvement over recent years. Pupils love school and thrive on the wide range of activities both within lessons and beyond.

Pupils achieve consistently well. Results in the tests taken at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been above average for several years. This is in sharp contrast to the situation at the time of the last inspection when results in some end of Key Stage 2 tests were well below national average. Some decline in standards in 2007 was largely the result of there being more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the year groups concerned. Pupils in Year 2 did well in reading but less so in writing and mathematics, where boys attained less well than girls. Key Stage 1 teachers have given an especial focus to literacy and making good use of the new numeracy framework. A scrutiny of work showed that pupils are now making good progress in the two areas concerned. In 2007, Year 6 pupils made better progress in English and science than they did in mathematics. However, overall progress was good and, in contrast to the last inspection report, the most able pupils achieved especially well. The school's own predictions suggest that pupils presently in Year 6 have made better progress in English and science than mathematics during Key Stage 2.

A major strength of the school is its success in helping pupils become polite, happy and keen workers who strive to do their best. Excellent home/school links and communication, highly effective use of outside agencies, and regularly seeking and acting on the views of pupils and parents have a big impact here. As a result, the school is able to put the care and best interests of pupils at the centre of its work. Pupils feel safe and confident because they get genuine attention from all the adults in the school, who are excellent role models for them of how to listen and speak to people. In consequence, behaviour is excellent. Highly attentive and courteous, pupils learn and make exceptional use of skills such as sharing ideas with partners and thinking through new ideas and approaches. When appropriate, most pupils adapt exceptionally well to working on their own. Pupils show outstanding initiative, examples being the role and status of the well organised school council, which interviewed candidates for the headship post, editorship of the 'Cool School' magazine, and organising clubs and activities. They are clear about the importance of healthy lifestyles, enthusiastically taking part in weekly outdoor physical education and having excellent awareness of how to ensure a balanced diet. Attendance is well above average, despite a small minority of families too readily taking holidays in term time.

A good curriculum is increasingly linking learning through themes such as French week, the strong and positive influence that art and music have, and the integrated use of information and communication technology (ICT). This enables pupils to reflect on and appreciate different ways to express ideas, for instance, by painting in the style of Van Gogh, mirroring literature in art and textile work, and learning to play a range of musical instruments. They respond well to the joy of making music or dancing, and appreciate the beauty of art and music from other times and cultures. Teachers work hard to make activities lively, practical and relevant. Particularly good work across subjects in Key Stage 1 takes place and there are some good examples of cross-curricular work in Key Stage 2. There is good provision for the more able pupils both in lessons and in wider activities. This includes sports coaching, mathematics and ICT work with the local high school, and using numeracy and ICT skills in running a tuck shop

and a weather station. However, a general weakness is that too few pupils understand how skills and approaches taught in one subject might be applied to solve problems or tackle new work in another.

Pupils learn well because lessons are carefully planned with tasks and success criteria made clear. Teaching is good; the result of much thought and preparation. Occasionally the main aim of the lesson becomes too vague, resulting in pupils working well, but not to the points the teacher originally intended. An additional teaching strength is the quality of teaching assistants and the way in which they work closely alongside teachers to support pupils.

This is a school which, through regular and rigorous monitoring of its work, knows its strengths and weaknesses very well. There is no complacency. Staff are committed to teamwork and improvement. Issues from the last inspection report were used to drive change with considerable success, leading to a significant rise in standards. Subject leaders have an extremely clear grasp of what is going on in their areas and happily accept responsibility for bringing about improvement. The regular and insightful checks they make give them a clear view of what needs to be done. A good system for tracking how well pupils are doing is in place. Parents comment on the smooth transition of leadership over the last few months, a tribute to the skills and sensitivity of all involved. The new headteacher has inherited a very healthy situation and is gradually building the new leadership team to take the school further on. She already has an excellent grasp of what needs to be done. Improvement planning is very good and its impact is regularly and thoroughly checked. The governing body is an important part of this process. Governors are involved in regular visits to see pupils at work, formal links with curriculum areas, and evaluate the school's work and plan future developments. This has given them the ability to advise by asking searching questions while offering full support and appreciation.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

When children join Reception their skills are at the levels expected of children their age, although they come from a very wide range of pre-school experiences. The school takes great care to make contact with children and families before they start school. This, added to good teaching which clearly sets out routines for work, play and behaviour, helps children to settle very quickly. They are soon very happy, busy and eager to please. The progress they make in learning to work in groups and take turns is an especial strength. Management is very effective, as evidenced by regular and thorough assessment. This enabled changes to be made to the curriculum to tackle a relative weakness in the language development of some children. By the end of the Reception year almost all have made good progress, both as learners and young people, which stands them in good stead for the future. Common working arrangements and good liaison ensure a smooth move from Reception to Key Stage 1.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards in mathematics.
- Enable pupils to better understand how they can use what they have learned to tackle new work more effectively.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

Inspection of Upperthong Junior and Infant School, Holmfirth, HD9 2LE

As you know, I recently inspected your school to see how well you are doing. Thank you to you all for being so welcoming and willing to talk about school. I was especially pleased to meet and talk with your school council.

Yours is a good school where some things are already excellent. You quickly and happily settle into school life and routines. This is because all the adults in the school give you time and take good care of you. Most of you love school and behave superbly well. I was impressed with how polite you are, and how you look after each other. You appreciate how teachers work hard to make sure that lessons are never dull. The things you do in art, music and technology help you to be creative. You thrive on the many extra activities the school offers, so that you become confident at performing in public. You also learn the skill of taking turns and supporting each other. The way you listened and sang in assembly, and then applauded those who tackled the 'challenges', was excellent. You are fortunate to be in a school where teachers think deeply about what is going on. Those in charge of subjects or school areas check very carefully to see that things are working well. The headteacher and other senior staff have a very clear idea of what needs to be done next. Governors, too, are doing a good job in encouraging and advising the school.

I have asked the teachers and governors to do two things to improve your school:

- help you to be better at mathematics
- get you to understand how things you learn in one subject can help you to tackle new work in others.

You can help by making every effort not to miss school, and by continuing the excellent behaviour and willingness to work hard which I saw during my visit.

My best wishes for your future happiness and success.