

Geoffrey Field Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109781
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	310092
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Sean O'Toole

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Summers
Headteacher	Mr Charlie Clare
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Exbourne Road Reading RG2 8RH
Telephone number	01189 015 475
Fax number	01189 015 479

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school. Over a quarter of pupils are eligible for free schools meals. Most pupils have white British heritage but about 20 per cent are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. A small proportion of these pupils have a first language other than English. There is a much higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties than found in most schools. They have a wide range of needs that include specific learning, behavioural, emotional and social problems and speech, language and communication difficulties. The school holds the Basic Skills and Healthy Schools awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

One of the strong messages coming from parents and pupils is that, 'The staff are all incredibly dedicated, supportive and caring.' Under the dynamic leadership of the headteacher and his enthusiastic team, standards have improved much in 2008 and inspection evidence shows that this improvement is likely to be maintained. Leaders have delivered this success through setting challenging targets for staff and by providing high quality support and guidance to both adults and pupils. The common vision shared between staff, pupils and governors has created a school in which pupils of all abilities consistently achieve well. However, more remains to be done to improve pupils' writing skills and competence in solving complex problems by extending opportunities for them to use literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the school and clearly enjoy the wealth of extra curricular activities, special events such as the arts week, and the many opportunities to take part in trips. As one parent wrote, 'I feel that my children are well looked after, treated as individuals and are actively encouraged to develop academically and socially.'

By responding to the pupils' interests and enthusiasms and through their use of assessment the staff clearly identify the next steps in learning and plan activities that the pupils say are fun and interesting. Whilst marking is thorough and supportive, in some cases pupils have insufficient opportunity to respond to the questions and issues raised. Teachers use a good range of approaches to engage the learners, providing opportunities for the pupils to share their ideas, benefit from well-focused support and make decisions about their own learning. Those with learning difficulties, especially those with behavioural difficulties, are nurtured and supported well. They are given achievable and challenging targets and the support they need to succeed. Pupils' behaviour is good due to the staff's high expectations and strong support for vulnerable groups. Pupils make substantial gains in their personal, social and emotional development due to the positive way that staff focus on building pupils' confidence. They are especially proud of their role in decision making, acting as mediators and safety inspectors. Because they apply for these posts they learn much about the world of work and develop a strong sense of responsibility and citizenship. Excellent links with the community contribute much to learners' very positive attitudes about the different races and cultures found in Britain today. The Madejski Awards for success in the Responsibility, Ownership, Participation, Exploration and Self motivation programme (ROPES) enhance pupils' self belief and spur them on to achieve well both socially and academically.

Leaders and managers have an accurate and incisive view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are ambitious for the pupils to succeed. They have excellent capacity to build on the school's good achievements. The impact of leadership has brought improved standards and consistency to pupils' progress throughout the school resulting in good achievement. Pupils' enjoyment of school and their very positive attitudes to learning are another outcome of the success of leaders in inspiring their pupils. Additionally, the excellent focus on the pupils' care and support ensure that all are included and valued. Staff work hard and have challenging targets linked to performance management. Governors have an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and call the staff to account for their actions. There is no complacency here and staff are inventive in finding ways of including pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, so that they enjoy school and learn to work together. One parent summed up the work of the school by writing, 'A very well maintained and staffed school which produces positive and motivated pupils.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase opportunities for pupils to use their basic literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Ensure that pupils have the opportunity to respond to and benefit from the teachers' ideas and suggestions in their marked work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils start school with below average skills, knowledge and understanding. Standards have improved due to the intense focus by leaders and managers on ensuring consistently good teaching. The most recent provisional test results show further good improvement, especially in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that the current Year 6 are on course to maintain this improvement. Nonetheless, the school is aware of the need to raise pupils' confidence in solving complex problems. Reading standards are average and writing is improving but some pupils lack confidence in applying these skills successfully in their writing in other subjects. Success in reading has been due to the use of a wide variety of strategies that have engaged the pupils. As one boy with learning difficulties said, 'I used to hate reading but now I love it.' Those from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress and are working at average levels by the time they leave the school. Pupils with specific learning needs, behavioural, emotional and social problems and speech, language and communication difficulties achieve well because of the well-focused support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils like school and are happy and well motivated. One boy said, 'I enjoy school because we learn how to help each other and share and care for everyone.' Pupils enjoy taking responsibility and are proud to represent their peers as school councillors. They have an excellent understanding of democracy and citizenship through their participation in elections and applications for a variety of jobs around the school. In lessons, they are attentive and show respect for their teachers and classmates. Their politeness and thoughtful behaviour contribute to the school's pleasant and purposeful environment where everyone can learn and play in safety. They are very quick in responding to challenges and are keen to achieve their targets. Pupils have an extremely strong awareness of healthy lifestyles and know about eating a balanced diet and taking plenty of exercise. They say they have great fun in school and particularly enjoy the rich variety of extra curricular activities that contribute to their fitness, well-being and enjoyment. Pupils are thoughtful and kind. Although they say there are occasional incidents of bullying, they feel safe and know that adults will listen and act if they are worried. They willingly raise funds for charities, find ways to improve their school such as developing the outdoor area and like to find out about different cultures and traditions. Because of the leaders' commitment to providing enjoyable, interesting and challenging opportunities the pupils' attendance has risen and is now good, and they clearly enjoy all aspects of school life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has improved much because of the ways in which leaders and managers provide good support and challenge, and have high expectations of their colleagues. Senior staff encourage their colleagues to find imaginative ways to stimulate learning. One of the strengths in teaching is the way that adults relate to the pupils and find different ways to help them to learn. The teaching assistants contribute well to learning and provide good support for those who lack confidence. Lessons are planned thoroughly and include a variety of strategies to keep learning moving at a good pace. Teachers use questions well to assess understanding and to enable the pupils to see how well they have met the lesson objectives. Marking is accurate and often includes good guidance about how to improve but pupils do not always have the time to follow up the suggestions or answer the questions that have been posed. English is taught well because pupils receive support through structured examples that help them to build up their stories. Setting is used well in mathematics lessons although teachers do not make sufficient use of problem solving to stretch the pupils' thinking. Pupils enjoy lessons and work hard but sometimes their work is marred by untidy presentation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is enhanced through the excellent provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional development. Leaders have been successful in creating opportunities for pupils to explore and investigate different ways of learning and this has contributed to high levels of enjoyment, good attendance and improved standards. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to live safely and healthily through their lessons, visits from the Life Caravan and circle times. The interesting trips and activities, combined with an excellent range of extra curricular activities also contribute to the pupils' high levels of enjoyment and positive attitudes to school. The provision for vulnerable groups including those with learning difficulties ensures that pupils are able to participate in all the school offers. All subjects are taught and the school is developing links between them. Staff recognise that these links should be extended to enable pupils to apply their basic skills in different contexts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

One of the hallmarks of the school's success is the excellent level of care and support provided for the pupils. Parents comment very favourably on the friendly and approachable staff. Their children say they feel safe in school and that they are confident that any problems are quickly resolved. The staff focus intensively on the pupils' well-being and there are robust child protection procedures, good quality risk assessment and detailed attention to matters of health and safety, including the contribution made by some of the children who act as safety inspectors. All requirements regarding safeguarding children are met. Pupils receive good academic guidance; target setting is robust and includes the involvement of parents. Those with learning difficulties say how much they appreciate the support they receive. Staff are attentive to detail and strive to find the best ways to engage vulnerable and less confident pupils so that they feel valued.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding relationships and a climate of encouragement in promoting pupils' learning have contributed much to ensuring consistently good teaching and achievement at the school. The pupils are at the centre of the school's work and adults value their opinions and respond to their suggestions. The focus on meeting every pupil's needs has led to a broadening of the curriculum and well organised and effective teaching. The school's success is built around effective teamwork and a shared commitment to meeting the needs of all. The headteacher achieves an excellent balance between challenge and support and this enables staff to take risks and to be creative in how they plan learning. Parents prize the school's friendly and purposeful atmosphere. The headteacher, staff and governors work extremely well together and, through rigorous analysis of test results and regular monitoring, make sure that improvement is always on the agenda. Their excellent capacity to improve is exemplified by the much improved standards, consistently good progress and improvements to the curriculum and pupils' attendance and behaviour. Governors are not only very supportive they are highly skilled in reviewing the school's work, setting exacting challenges and monitoring the school's success. They hold the staff to account and are fully involved in developing the school's initiatives.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Geoffrey Field Junior School, Reading, RG2 8RH

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing how much you contribute to the life of the school. Your artwork was particularly impressive. It was good to see that you behave well and get along together and your school council, safety inspectors and mediators are to be congratulated on how they help to make your school a better place. Your mums and dads said how pleased they are with the school especially the extra activities that are on offer. It was lovely to hear you talk about your work and how much you like your teachers.

Your school gives you a good education. These are some of the good things about your school.

- You work hard and make consistently good progress.
- The staff care about you and make sure that you are safe and happy.
- You are kind and thoughtful and show respect for others.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors work hard to make the school successful and have brought about many improvements.
- The teaching is good and you enjoy learning.
- You have lots of opportunities to join in extra activities.

You can help the teachers to make the school even better by always trying your best and by answering the questions that teachers put in your books when they mark your work. We would also like the teachers to find more ways of helping you to use your literacy and numeracy skills when you are learning other subjects.

We hope that you continue to enjoy school and continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Sean O'Toole

Lead Inspector