

Hobletts Manor Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117097
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312488
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Simon Griffiths

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Rob Harper
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Short
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Adeyfield Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP2 5JS
Telephone number	01442251805
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that found in most schools. Standards on entry are broadly in line with those expected for children of this age. The school has a Healthy Schools Award and Active Mark for its work in promoting physical activity.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hobletts Manor School provides a satisfactory quality of education and offers satisfactory value for money. It has been through a period of considerable staff change, which led to declining standards over several years. Over the past year, however, staffing has stabilised. There is now a satisfactory leadership team, well led by the headteacher and supported by committed governors, who share the drive for improvement. Rigorous measures to check on pupils' progress are now in place and actions taken using this information have raised standards. The 2007 test results showed improved standards and achievement and these improvements continue in the current school year. Standards are now broadly average, representing satisfactory progress in relation to pupils' starting points. Academic targets are more challenging and pupils are on track to reach them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

The school provides satisfactory care and guidance for pupils. Academic guidance is satisfactory but not all pupils are aware of their targets or the next steps in their learning. Pupils enjoy school and respect their teachers who they say are 'all kind'. Their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory, as is their behaviour. Pupils get on well with each other and feel safe in school, explaining that teachers 'don't stand any nonsense'. Pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep healthy and feel safe in school. Attendance is satisfactory and improving steadily. Pupils' progress in their personal qualities and academic skills give them a sound basis for their future economic lives.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are good and teachers plan their lessons carefully with clear learning objectives. As a result, pupils are now making better progress. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to the learning of groups and individuals. However, progress is still variable across the school. Not all teachers use the assessment information sufficiently well to ensure activities are at the right level in order to challenge all pupils. This is particularly the case with more able pupils. Sometimes lessons lack pace and urgency. A satisfactory curriculum provides a broad range of activities, which motivate and engage pupils. They particularly enjoy their French lessons and the range of extra opportunities offered to them, including a residential visit to Lyme Regis.

School leaders have acted decisively over the past year to tackle underachievement and these actions have an impact particularly for the older pupils. However, the school's action plans are not sufficiently precise to support subject leaders in monitoring their subjects and raising standards further. Nevertheless, the school has a sound knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and the actions taken and improvements made demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the recent improvements are established across the whole school to enable all pupils to achieve well and reach their full potential.
- Ensure all teachers make good use of assessment information in their planning, enabling all groups of learners, particularly the more able, to be suitably challenged.
- Improve the quality of whole-school action-planning so that there are specific actions with measurable outcomes, clear timelines and success criteria.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards had declined over recent years, and in 2006 were below average. However, the new leadership team, together with governors, identified the areas of weakness. Robust methods for tracking progress, along with other actions put in place, have resulted in improvements. While the 2007 test results were again below average, these pupils had lower starting points and evidence from tracking showed their achievement had improved on previous years. These improvements are being maintained and standards in the current Year 6 are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement. The close monitoring of pupils' progress seen in Years 5 and 6, is being used more effectively across the whole school. This is beginning to show some success with younger pupils in addressing previous underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school and get on well together. They have good relationships and say they really like their teachers. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and the school has effective systems to make sure these improvements continue. Behaviour is satisfactory. It is good when pupils are involved in their work, but is sometimes a little boisterous on occasions when pupils are not stimulated by lessons. Pupils have a sound understanding of right and wrong and a thorough knowledge of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils feel safe and believe that if anyone was being bullied it would be dealt with quickly and efficiently. Their moral and social development is good. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, but not incorporated into the curriculum in a systematic way. Pupils are also becoming aware of healthy choices in terms of eating and staying physically fit. The school council is well established and there are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take responsibility around school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are good relationships between adults and pupils and teachers are usually successful in promoting positive attitudes to learning. Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to learning through supporting groups and individuals. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously but do not always give enough guidance on what it is the pupil needs to do to improve. Teachers make effective use of the resources available to them, such as information and communication technology (ICT). Lesson plans are detailed but not all teachers make enough use of assessment information to match work to the needs of different groups of learners or to build on previous learning. As a result, in some lessons, the pace is too slow and expectations are not high enough. This is particularly the case with more able pupils, whose work sometimes lacks challenge. Pupils have the opportunity to share and discuss their learning but are not always aware of the objectives of the discussion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the statutory requirements and incorporates aspects of local life through trips and visits. There is a good range of extra-curricular clubs such as gardening club, ICT, mathematics and various sports, which pupils enjoy. The provision for ICT and religious education is satisfactory an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils say they value community activities, such as the recent harvest festival, and day and residential trips, which form the basis for some interesting lessons. However, there are few cross-curricular links to support and extend learning and add interest and enjoyment. The school has identified the provision for more able pupils as an area for development and is making sure that all aspects build on pupils' prior attainment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has effective procedures and policies in place for the safeguarding of its pupils. The school's provision for pastoral care ensures pupils feel well cared for and supported. Their parents support this view. The school promotes a good level of inclusion for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. It has recognised the need to extend similar equality of opportunity to higher attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented. Not all pupils are aware of their own targets for improvement. Actions to improve attendance have been effective and are having a positive impact.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a clear strategic direction for the school, strongly focused on the need to raise standards and this is turning around the previous trend of underachievement. An enthusiastic and committed leadership team supports her. Together they have put plans into place to raise achievement. While these have been successful with older pupils, they are not yet established across the whole school. Subject leaders have clear roles and responsibilities, but have had limited impact on raising standards in their subjects. This is because action-planning is too general and monitoring systems to support their work are not yet fully in place. Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and fully understand there is still more to do. Governors support this vision and provide satisfactory strategic and practical support and challenge.

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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?	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
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

12 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hobletts Manor Junior School, Hemel Hempsted, HP2 5JS

We would like to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. You were very friendly and helpful and helped us by talking to us and sharing your work.

We think you are lucky to go to a school where the staff work hard to make sure you are happy and enjoy school. It was good to see most of you behaving well, getting on, and looking after each other. You told us how you respect the teachers and value what the school does for you. Your lessons are usually interesting and the work you do is marked carefully but marking could give you more advice about how to improve. You also enjoy the extra opportunities the school offers, such as the visits and plays and performances. We also felt your school was an interesting place to learn with your work displayed so effectively around the school.

Although many of you are doing well we think that everybody can do that bit better. All of the adults in the school want to see you do better and we have asked the teachers to do the following to make this happen.

- Ensure that the work you do is always of a high enough standard so that you all make progress of which you are able.
- Make sure all of the activities you do in lessons are at the right level of difficulty for you so you think hard and do as well as you can.
- Ensure that the plans the school has in place to make it better are thorough so that improvements happen as fast as possible.

We know you will do your bit by working as hard as you can in every lesson to try and meet your targets

We would like to wish you the very best for the future.

Simon Griffiths

Lead inspector