

Knebworth Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117120
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312498
Inspection date	23 September 2008
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	386
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Crome
Headteacher	Mr Michael John
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Swangleys Lane Knebworth Hertfordshire SG3 6AA

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	23 September 2008
Inspection number	312498

Telephone number
Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. The following areas were inspected in detail:

- How the school intends to raise standards in writing across the school.
- How effectively assessment information is used to provide pupils with good quality academic guidance.
- How leaders and managers with recently redefined roles monitor and evaluate the school's performance and how this process leads to school's self-evaluation and school improvement planning.

Teaching, learning, pupils' personal development and the curriculum were also inspected. Other aspects of the school's work were not looked at in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report. Observations of lessons and pupils' work, discussions with the headteacher, governors and pupils, the parental questionnaires and school self-evaluation documents provided inspection evidence.

Description of the school

This larger than average school is situated in a large village just to the south of Stevenage. Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at the beginning of the term before their fifth birthday. The proportion of pupils claiming a free school meal is well below average. Attainment on entry is broadly typical for children of this age. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. Most of these pupils have moderate learning or communication difficulties. The majority of pupils come from White British families, although a small number have minority ethnic backgrounds and are at the early stages of learning English. The school has achieved the Activemark for its provision in physical activity. The headteacher took up post at the beginning of the term in which the inspection took place.

Knebworth After School Club is provided independently of the school.

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 in which pupils progress well and achieve standards by the end of Year 6 that are consistently above average. It has outstanding features in the EYFS and in pupils' personal development. The school provides good value for money.

Although overall standards have remained above average, there has been a dip in the achievement of pupils at Key Stage 2 in recent years. This has now improved. Pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress overall. In mathematics and in reading, standards are above average and progress is particularly strong. However, improvement in pupils' writing has not been as good. Inspection evidence shows that children make exceptionally good progress in developing early writing skills in EYFS, but this level of progress is not continued in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is mainly because teachers are not yet effective enough in their use of assessment information to provide pupils with a clear understanding of what makes writing good and how they can improve. There are efficient systems to monitor pupils' achievement. The school tracks progress in reading, writing and mathematics through the National Curriculum levels, and teachers' own regular assessments of pupils' work in class support this, giving staff a clear idea of how well pupils are doing. This information is now used to set challenging targets and improved assessment procedures are having an impact in raising standards. However, pupils' involvement in assessing the quality of their own work is at a very early stage of development. There is some good practice emerging, where pupils carry out self- and peer assessment, further informing them of what they do well and how to do even better, but this is not yet consistent practice across the school.

Uneven progress across the school also links with inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Although teaching is good overall, the school's own observation records and inspection evidence record satisfactory, good and outstanding teaching. Some parents' commented on their children's progress being uneven through the school. Common features of effective teaching are high expectations of pupils' behaviour, very good relationships, clear statements of learning intentions and interesting presentations, often using information and communication technology (ICT). These features are instrumental in establishing a calm and productive learning environment. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to supporting pupils in their focus groups during group work times. They are skilled, know their pupils well and give them confidence to take the next steps. However, they do not always make a worthwhile contribution during times when teachers are teaching classes at the beginning and end of lessons. Best practice includes sessions at the end of lessons that are used well to review learning and to enable pupils to share what they think they have done well with others. At its best, teachers' marking is informative - it tells pupils what they do well and identifies areas for improvement, but again this quality is not consistent across the school. Where teaching and learning are less successful, work is not always matched well enough to the learning needs for pupils at different levels of attainment. At these times tasks are not challenging enough for pupils capable of working at a quicker pace and teachers' expectations are therefore not high enough.

The development of excellent personal skills begins in the nursery, where exceptionally secure foundations are laid down. The good curriculum and the level of care shown for pupils helps pupils develop their personal qualities very well. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. They are aware of how to stay physically fit and eat healthily. They put this excellent knowledge and understanding into practice well. Excellent personal development supports learning, with pupils showing behaviour and attitudes towards learning that are of a

high quality. Pupils demonstrate a growing curiosity to find out and learn. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils relate to each other exceptionally well, with older pupils looking after younger ones extremely well and supporting their early learning, as reading partners for example. Excellent social and moral development is seen in the high level of social cohesion in the school and the excellent relationships that exist between pupils and adults and between pupils of different ages. Pupils make a good contribution to the school, local community and to the world community through charitable work. There is a school council, which has an impact on school life, but pupils who are not councillors would value more opportunity to present their views to members of the council. This all adds to the good community feel in the school, which is promoted effectively. Pupils feel safe in school. They feel free from any form of intimidation from other pupils. They all know who to approach for support if they need to. Pupils really enjoy school. They say they find it interesting and this is evident in the enthusiastic way they engage in school life. Attendance is above average. They are well prepared for the next stages in their education with good core skills and an excellent work ethic.

The headteacher has recently joined the school. He already provides strong leadership, has quickly got to know the school and has established a clear direction for improvement. He has revised and strengthened the leadership and management roles of the senior leadership team, empowering them to introduce and lead initiatives to raise standards. Those with responsibility are becoming more involved in monitoring standards and evaluating the quality of provision within their areas of responsibility. The impact can already be seen in recent improvements in pupils' writing, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2. All contribute to the whole school's self-evaluation and development planning, both of which are good. Targets are challenging and contribute directly to pupils' achievement. Governors are effective. They are organised well and work in close collaboration with the school. They provide support and challenge for the headteacher and senior leadership team. They clearly know what the school needs to move it forwards and are clear about what they were looking for in a new headteacher. The school has good capacity to improve. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear vision of how to bring about improvements, which is already showing signs of raising standards of writing.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well in this outstanding EYFS. They make rapid progress in all areas of learning from the moment they start school, so that when they move into Year 1, standards are above those expected for their age and the great majority of children are working comfortably with Key Stage 1 National Curriculum work. This is because of a number of excellent features. EYFS provision is expertly led and managed. The teacher has established excellent teamwork. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable, and efficiently and effectively deployed. The teacher leads by example and demonstrates high quality teaching, which results in excellent learning. Other adults learn from this example and all show considerable skill in turning all activities into meaningful and enjoyable learning opportunities, successfully combining different areas of learning. Their expectations are high and tasks challenging so children readily engage in highly effective learning. There is an excellent balance between learning indoors and outside and between teacher-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. Accommodation and resources are good. The highly effective use of these provides an exciting learning environment with interesting and engaging role-play areas, supporting the curriculum

very effectively. Adults have an exceptionally accurate picture of how well each individual child is doing. Assessment is thorough and rigorous. It is built into planning and there are planned observations on all children learning at play and in more formal learning situations. ICT is used well by adults to improve the effectiveness of teaching presentations and by children in learning activities. Children's personal, social and emotional development is strong. Children are confident and happy, showing excellent levels of enjoyment. They are stimulated and interested children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is at least good in all teaching groups and classes so that pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- Provide pupils with a better understanding of what makes a high quality piece of writing, so that they will be able to evaluate their own and others' performance, and thereby improve the quality of their written work.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/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	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

24 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Knebworth Primary and Nursery School, Knebworth, SG3 6AA

Thank you all for making me welcome when I visited your school recently. I would like to thank you all for helping me find out all about your school, especially those pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to me. I enjoyed meeting you and your teachers, visiting lessons to watch you work and speaking to you to find out what you think about the school and how you contribute to make it a very enjoyable place to be.

You go to a good school. Those children in the Nursery and Reception get an excellent start to school life. Although Mr John is new to the school, he has already started to make improvements and I know he is grateful for the cooperation you all have shown in helping him settle in. He and all the other adults working with you are working well to provide you with a good education and have high ambitions for the school's future. The quality of teaching and the learning opportunities are good. You all make good progress in your lessons and reach above average standards in your work, but there is still some room for improvement in the quality of your writing. You have excellent attitudes to your school. Your behaviour is excellent and it is clear that you all enjoy being at school.

I am asking the staff and governors to help you achieve as well in writing as you do in reading and mathematics, by giving you all the skills that you need to be able to judge how well you are doing for yourselves and to improve your performance. I am also asking that the teaching for all of you is at least good so that the progress you make is even across the school. I hope you will all help make the school to become even better by continuing to cooperate with your teachers.

I wish you all the best in the future.

David Speakman

Lead inspector