

Markyate Village School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117127
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312503
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Pangbourne

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Michelle Rangel/Mrs Tamzin Evers (Joint)
Headteacher	Mr Jon Hood
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2003
School address	Cavendish Road Markyate St Albans Hertfordshire AL3 8PT
Telephone number	01582 840537
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language. When children enter the Nursery, their attainment varies in each year group, but it broadly meets expectations for their age. Usually, their social skills are well developed. The proportion taking a free school meal is average as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is above average. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status and the Hertfordshire quality standard for the Foundation Stage. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is steadily improving as initiatives introduced by the new and visionary headteacher take effect. He is leading the school on a secure journey of improvement, injecting more rigour into all aspects of its work. Consequently, pupils are beginning to do better. The joint chairs of governors are very perceptive and work effectively with him to identify and address areas for improvement. They make a strong team who, together with other governors, are committed to providing the best for the pupils. Parents are positive about the school. One wrote, 'We have seen a lot of improvements and we are very pleased with the whole package'. The pupils agree saying, 'The teachers are really nice and help you get on'.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, make sound progress and achieve satisfactorily. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. Achievement is improving and standards are rising as staff gain a greater understanding of what pupils know and need to learn next. Standards vary from year to year because year groups are small and some include a high proportion of pupils with significant learning difficulties. The school has recognised that standards should be higher given pupils' starting points. Over the last five years, standards have been broadly average by the end of Year 6. In 2006, standards fell, particularly in Year 6, but measures introduced by the headteacher successfully halted the decline. In 2007, standards were above average in Year 2. These pupils achieved satisfactorily from their above average starting point at the beginning of Year 1. Standards were again broadly average for pupils in Year 6. Pupils do better in reading than they do in writing, and no boys have reached the higher Level 5 in writing recently. The school has recognised this through its thorough monitoring and evaluation and has begun to introduce ways to address it.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, reflecting the caring ethos of the school. Consequently, pupils are polite and their behaviour is good. The older pupils enjoy helping the younger ones, particularly at lunchtime. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They receive good pastoral support, so they grow in confidence and take on a range of responsibilities. The exceptional emphasis on healthy lifestyles, particularly through physical activities, means that pupils are particularly knowledgeable about how to keep fit.

A range of visits, visitors and out of school activities enriches the satisfactory curriculum. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but some is good. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Staff are now monitoring each pupil's progress closely through the use of a new tracking system. This is helping the school to raise standards and provide extra support for anyone who is falling behind. However, the quality of feedback to pupils varies and, as a result, they are not always sufficiently clear about what they need to do to improve. Subject leaders fulfil their roles satisfactorily but there is scope to improve their monitoring and evaluation skills so that the expertise of all staff can be used more effectively to bring about school improvement. Nevertheless, sound leadership and management, based on accurate school self-evaluation has resulted in noticeable improvements since the previous inspection and indications are that the school has a sound capacity for continued growth.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents praise the start their children make in the Foundation Stage. One wrote, 'The team of teachers really care about the progress of each individual'. The early years' unit provides for both Nursery children and those in Reception. Good leadership of the Foundation Stage ensures that planned activities are exciting and meet the children's needs through Nursery and Reception. The quality of teaching is good and, consequently, children make good progress. Most children transfer to the Nursery from the pre-school group, keen to learn and with good social skills. As a result, their behaviour is good. Adults pay close attention to developing children's basic skills. For example, they follow a structured, commercial programme to teach the sounds to help the children learn to read. Consequently, by the end of the Reception year, most children have reached the standards expected for their age in all the areas of learning and some exceed them, particularly in some year groups.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable all pupils to do as well as they can, particularly the more able boys in writing, by ensuring all lessons come up to that of the best.
- Ensure feedback to pupils enables them to know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the leadership skills of all subject leaders so that expertise is used well and focused on school improvement.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language achieve satisfactorily. In 2007, standards were above average by the end of Year 2. The proportion reaching the higher Level 3 was above average in reading, and mathematics, although fewer pupils reached this higher level in writing. Standards were broadly average in reading, mathematics and science and below average in writing by the end of Year 6. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was below average in English and mathematics, particularly in writing. Although the relatively small numbers of pupils at the school mean that the make up of each year group varies, indications are that test results are likely to be broadly similar to those of 2007 but pupils are making at least sound progress in relation to their starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils work together confidently and behave well. A small minority of pupils do not always meet the school's high expectations of behaviour but staff manage them effectively so that their behaviour does not disturb the learning of others. Pupils participate regularly in aerobic sessions and family fun-runs before school to help them keep fit. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe. The school council contributes well to the running of the school, for example, by recycling waste and organising older pupils to help younger ones at

break-times. Pupils contribute happily to the local community in events such as the Village May Fair. They also support a number of charities in the wider community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The new linked curriculum and the school's caring environment support these areas well. Pupils' attitudes to learning and attainment in basic skills indicate that the foundations for the next stages in their educational careers are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are strengths in teaching but practice is inconsistent. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and use challenging questions to extend learning. Behaviour is well managed. Lessons proceed at a good pace and support staff are deployed effectively. Pupils are encouraged to check their work against the objectives for the lesson. Different tasks are set according to pupils' level of attainment. However, in other lessons, the pace is slow, pupils are not clear about what they have to do, and time is wasted. This limits their rate of progress. On occasions, support staff are not used effectively during whole class sessions. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Although pupils have targets to help them improve, they are not always familiar with them and teachers do regularly refer to them in lessons or in their marking. Consequently, pupils are not always sure about what they have done well or what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Recent improvements to the curriculum, linking subjects together in half-termly units are beginning to make learning more meaningful for pupils but these changes have not yet had sufficient time to become fully embedded. The school has identified the need for new strategies to raise standards in English. These methods have proved successful in reading but have not yet made an impact on standards in writing. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and includes a range of clubs including sport, needlework and film club. A residential visit in Norfolk is a key event in the school's calendar and the programme of events helps to improve pupils' problem-solving and social skills. Visits to other places locally, and the expertise of visitors, are used well to support work in areas such as personal safety and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and child protection procedures are in place. Pastoral care is good and contributes positively to their personal development. Effective links with outside agencies that provide positive support for particular pupils and their families. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is effective and helps them make satisfactory progress. Academic guidance is satisfactory. New assessment procedures are in place, involving targets for pupils in English and mathematics, but not all pupils are clear about their targets and how to improve their work. There is a lack of consistency in the assessment of progress in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has successfully introduced several initiatives to move the school forward. For example, he has introduced tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress, improved the information given to governors, broadened the curriculum, encouraged teachers to use success criteria to support learning, and provided appropriate professional support for teachers. All these things are beginning to have a positive impact on standards of attainment and progress. Challenging targets are now used effectively to raise standards. He is supported by the senior leadership team well, who are fulfilling their roles with increasing success. Although subject leaders have an understanding of standards in subjects where test data is available, those with responsibility for other subjects are just beginning to gain an overview of standards in these areas of the curriculum. The governors are supportive and are beginning to act as 'critical friends'. They are gaining an understanding of standards and achievement through their newly established 'data panel'. They have funded an extra teacher for the Foundation Stage so these children can be taught in smaller groups to meet their needs.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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

19 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Markyate Village School and Nursery, Markyate, AL3 8PT

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We would like to tell you what we found out.

You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that the grown-ups look after you well and help you to learn. We agree with you. You make good progress in the Nursery and Reception class. We thought your behaviour was good and that you were polite and friendly to visitors. The way that you know how to be healthy is excellent and I enjoyed watching the younger pupils do their aerobics! You have interesting things to do in lessons and after school. Your families like your school too. Mr Hood and the governors are introducing many things to help you with your learning.

We have asked your headteacher and other teachers to help you to make better progress, especially in writing. We would like the boys to try particularly hard, especially those who find it quite easy to write well. Some teachers have really good ideas for helping you to learn and we have asked them to share their ideas with other staff. The teachers are looking to see how well you are doing and we would like them to remind you what you need to do to improve further. You can help by thinking about your targets while you are working. Some teachers who are responsible for subjects like history, geography, music, information and communication technology and physical education are beginning to find out how well you are doing and we have asked if they can do more of this.

We hope you carry on enjoying your time at Markyate School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead inspector