

Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117145
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312512
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Steve Kingsbury
Headteacher	Mr Pete Rose
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	High Street Colney Heath St Albans Hertfordshire AL4 0NP
Telephone number	01727 823898
Fax number	01727 827025

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size village primary school where most pupils live nearby. Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and the percentage receiving free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is also average. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. Pupils enter school with aspects of their personal, social and emotional development and communication skills slightly below those usually seen in children of that age. In other areas, their skills and attainment are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds with an above average proportion from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is average. A few pupils are in care. There are three Traveller sites within the school's catchment area and the school has had links with the Traveller community over a number of years. Currently, there are nine pupils in school from this community.

The school has received the Early Years Quality Mark and the Healthy Schools Award in recognition of its work.

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 where pupils enjoy their learning. The strong community ethos and good relationships, together with good teaching, help pupils to achieve well so that by the time they leave in Year 6, standards are usually above average. Parents are very supportive of the school and what it offers, as indicated in the following comments, 'This is a fantastic, friendly, supportive community school' where 'the headteacher encourages and sets an example to all pupils and teachers.'

Effective leadership, management and governance ensure that the school provides good value for money. Clear self-evaluation procedures are in place to check how well the school is doing and identify what it could do better. These have been instrumental in the good improvement made since the last inspection. They indicate that the school is well placed to improve further. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is committed to raising standards and promoting pupils' well-being. He has brought a sense of urgency to school improvement and has introduced several key changes that have helped to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing. Recent developments to the management of the school have given greater responsibility to individual subject leaders. However, they have not yet had time to become fully effective in their roles, particularly regarding scrutinising provision and attainment and planning to raise standards. Nevertheless, a good start has been made.

The successful introduction of clearer procedures for checking pupils' progress means that staff can more quickly identify those in danger of falling behind and provide effective additional programmes of work to support their learning. Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is particularly strong. New systems are in place for assessing and marking pupils' work and setting targets. However, they are not yet fully effective in indicating what pupils have achieved and what they should aim for.

Teaching and the curriculum are good because lessons are interesting and the pace of learning is usually brisk. Staff use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively as a tool to make learning points clear and to maintain pupils' interests. This, and increasing links between subjects, has had a significant impact on motivating pupils and developing their attitudes and learning. Sometimes, particularly in Key Stage 2, there is inadequate challenge and the pace of learning slows. Progress accelerates in Year 6 so that overall, pupils achieve well. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of staff, are taught to respect and care for others and behave well. They understand how to live safe and healthy lives; they play games enthusiastically and there is a good uptake of after school clubs, which encourage exercise and fitness. Pupils' good social skills and their progress in English and mathematics, help prepare them well for the next stage of their education and beyond.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's development and learning are good in both the Nursery and Reception. They settle well because links between home, school and the pre-school are good, expectations are clear and routines helpful. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and use this very effectively to plan a good range of interesting activities across all areas of learning both in class and outside. This helps to motivate children to learn and encourages them to behave well. A particularly good balance of learning is achieved between children developing

their independent skills by working unaided, and opportunities for them to work under the close direction of an adult. Through regular observations and assessments, staff gain a good understanding of what children know and achieve so tasks are well matched to their abilities. High aspirations are evident through the good leadership and management and reflected in the consistent good practice throughout. By the time they enter Year 1, children are working securely within the level expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of assessment, marking and pupils' targets to ensure that lessons are always challenging and pupils have a clear understanding of what they have achieved and what they should aim for.
- Extend the work of subject leaders so all have a clearer role in improving provision and raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities, including those who find learning difficult, achieve well. Recent improvements to teaching and learning have improved their rate of progress and raised standards. In 2007, Year 2 pupils made satisfactory progress and reached broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Current standards, are above average, and particularly strong in reading and writing. Similarly, although there was a decline in Year 6 standards in 2007, the previous pattern of above average standards has now been re-established; pupils currently in Year 6 are working at above average levels in English, mathematics and science and are on course to reach their challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have very positive attitudes to school and enjoy learning. They are very enthusiastic and show respect for one another, the adults who help them and the school itself. Pupils give of their best and take pride in their achievements. They grow in self-awareness and reflect upon their feelings and actions. They are invariably courteous and polite. Behaviour is good. Attendance is satisfactory and improving because school systems are good and rigorously applied. Pupils look after one another very well, for example, the school council offers guidance to any pupil who feels worried. Pupils play a very full and active part in the life of the school by organising fund-raising for charities and offering their ideas for improvement. Older pupils take on many responsibilities and make a very real contribution. Whilst pupils have a strong sense of their individual rights and responsibilities in the school and local communities, they are less well prepared for the wider more diverse community in which they live.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good relationships between staff and pupils and the supportive atmosphere in lessons creates a good environment where pupils enjoy their learning and confidently put forward their views or ask for help. Planning is good. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want pupils

to learn and plan lessons where learning builds systematically over time. Usually, work is matched well to pupils' capabilities although now and again, pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those who need additional support with English and mathematics. In the best lessons, teachers use a range of teaching activities that match the different learning styles within the class and use questioning well to develop pupils' thinking and understanding. Teachers use the end of lessons well to assess pupils' progress and consolidate learning. Generally, they mark pupils' work satisfactorily; however, while some teachers show clearly what pupils have done well and what they should do next to improve, this is not yet common practice across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is relevant, interesting and meets pupils' different needs well. The school modifies its curriculum very effectively for those who find learning difficult so they make good progress. Specific additional extension activities challenge the most able pupils appropriately. A particularly strong emphasis is given to developing important basic skills such as the knowledge of letter sounds. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their interest in themed events, such as 'Victorian Day', which motivate and make learning fun. This demonstrates the successful start made by the school in linking subjects and providing 'hands-on' activities to ensure learning is relevant and exciting. Visitors and visits, including residential trips, also extend and enliven the curriculum. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and contributes to pupils' good personal development. Pupils are particularly successful in sport. Good use is made of the excellent outdoor areas to enhance both learning and pupils' enjoyment of all other aspects of school life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care and support are very strong. Much is done to ensure that they settle quickly in school and look forward positively to the next stage of their learning. There are good links with local agencies to provide additional support for pupils who need it. Pupils' needs are identified quickly, and the progress of those who struggle is monitored closely so that their academic and personal needs can continue to be met very well. All pupils have targets to help them improve but these are not always used effectively enough to promote rapid learning. The school meets requirements for safeguarding its pupils. Staff have organised a number of information sessions to give parents a better understanding of how and what their children are learning, and this has had a clear impact on improving pupils' rates of learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Staff have responded positively to the introduction of new ways of tracking pupils' progress from entry to Year 6, resulting in higher expectations of teaching and learning and better standards. Good self-evaluation has led to the identification of appropriate priorities for action. The school's slightly modest evaluations of its effectiveness reflect the high aspirations of management and the drive for improvement. Through effective monitoring and evaluation, governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

They hold the school to account by, for example, asking about standards and how they can be improved.

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

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 disabilities make progress	2

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	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

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?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

4 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School, Colney Heath, Hertfordshire, AL4 0NP

You may remember that two inspectors recently visited your school and talked to you about your work. We enjoyed our visit, and would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. You and your parents think Colney Heath is a good school and we agree with you. If you read on you will see some of the things we found out.

- You work hard and make good progress so that by Year 6, you frequently reach standards above those we usually see.
- You enjoy school and behave well because you are interested in the work.
- You get on well with each other and make good friends. The older pupils look after others well, for example, when acting as reading buddies.
- Many of you come to school regularly and on time so attendance is improving. Well done! Please keep it up so you do not miss any valuable lessons.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and enjoy working and playing outside.
- Teaching is good. Those of you who sometimes find it difficult to learn are helped a lot and therefore do well.
- You feel safe in school. We were pleased to hear that you talk to a friend, member of the school council or member of staff if you have problems.

Mr Rose manages the school well and staff and governors give him lots of help. They have all agreed to focus on two things to make the school even better. They will improve the way they use assessment, marking and your targets to make sure that lessons are always challenging. This will help you have a clear understanding of what you have done well and what you could do better. You could help by making sure you respond to their comments and by working hard to meet your targets. We know you will try as hard as you can. Teachers in charge of subjects are also going to do more to make sure your work is as interesting as it can be and you do as well as you can.

We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith Lead inspector