

Knutsford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117165
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312521
Inspection date	13 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Speakman

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	442
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Jimminson
Headteacher	Mr R Randall
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	Knutsford Avenue Watford Hertfordshire WD24 7ER
Telephone number	01923 466020
Fax number	01923 466023

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- - whether there are any differences in the rate of pupils' achievement at different stages of the school;
- - the effectiveness of assessment procedures to track pupils' progress;
- - which aspects of the curriculum are good;
- - the effectiveness of the pastoral care and academic guidance provided.

The inspector found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were sometimes modest, and the upgraded assessments have been included where appropriate in this report. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons and pupils' work, discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and pupils, the parent questionnaires and school self-evaluation documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

This large school serves a relatively advantaged area. An above average number of pupils come from backgrounds other than White British. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is similar to the national average and a small number receive special support. The proportion of pupils who take free school meals is low. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, but is similar for those with a statement of special educational need. The attainment of pupils starting Nursery is typical of children of this age. The school has held the Healthy School status for the past six years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school certainly lives up to its motto, displayed clearly in the entrance: 'High Expectations = High Outcomes. Low Expectations = Low Outcomes.' The school accurately judges its effectiveness to be good with some excellent features. This is because staff have high expectations of themselves and believe that there is always scope to improve and develop further. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and provides excellent value for money.

Adults working in the school and the governing body make up a very strong team who work extremely effectively under the excellent leadership of the headteacher. He believes strongly in supporting colleagues at all levels to improve their professional skills so that they can be highly effective in their work. For example, monitoring recently highlighted some concern about the quality of provision in one area of the school. The staff team was supported very effectively in evaluating and improving their performance and this aspect of the school's work is now excellent.

Standards in the current Year 2 are above average and better than the national test results of 2007, which were broadly average in writing and mathematics, but above average in reading. In Year 6, the test results have been consistently above, and often well above, average. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is currently well above that expected for pupils of the same age and the predictions for the current Year 5 are extremely high. From an average starting point, this represents outstanding achievement. The school is highly regarded locally for its provision in information and communication technology (ICT) and standards in this area are very high. Music is also a strong feature of the school with over two hundred pupils learning to play musical instruments.

The school provides exceptional care for all pupils. Central to the school's work is its concern for the welfare and progress of every child. An inclusion coordinator makes sure that all pupils, whatever their individual circumstances or needs, are fully supported and given the best opportunity to achieve their full potential. The school successfully meets the needs of the growing number of pupils joining the school with little or no English and is justifiably proud of the support it gives to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need. Through skilled teaching and support, particularly from the teaching assistants, these pupils make excellent progress. Those who join the school with behavioural problems are given effective pastoral support including targets to help them improve their behaviour to match the high standards expected.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour in the school is excellent and pupils consider this normal. They disapprove of any inappropriate behaviour, which they say is very rare. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They enjoy school very much and attendance is above average. They feel secure, say there is no bullying or aggressive behaviour and know who to go to if they need help. This includes the 'peer mediators', a group of trained older pupils who help other pupils sort out any minor problems. Pupils' contribution to the school community, through this and other responsibilities such as the school council, is good.

They have a very good understanding of healthy eating and try hard to maintain a healthy lifestyle through their diet and by taking part in the numerous opportunities provided to stay physically fit. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stages in their education. As well

as excellent literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, they have considerable opportunities to work in collaboration with others.

The quality of education is excellent. Teaching and learning are outstanding and a key factor in pupils' rapid progress. Teachers know the pupils very well and use their knowledge, together with comprehensive assessment information, to challenge all pupils constantly so that they achieve their full potential. Teachers pay great attention to detail, using ICT very effectively, and their presentations in lessons are of a high professional quality. This provides an excellent example for pupils, who in turn, have high expectations of their own work. They assess the quality of their own performance in many lessons by recording a judgement on how well they think they have done and how well they have understood the learning intentions. Sometimes they assess their own work and at times, that of other pupils. This gives them a good idea of how well they are doing, how they can improve and what to aim for. They also receive excellent additional guidance from teachers' through regular feedback and marking. The curriculum is good. It is enriched very well with extra activities that effectively interest and engage pupils. There are good links between literacy, ICT and different subjects, and there are some 'themed' days but the planning for this area is not yet fully established. The school sees this as a next step in curriculum development.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are undoubtedly rigorous and ensure that school leaders, including the governors, have an excellent idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. At times, however, their high level of challenge has led the school to be unduly self-critical. Governors are very much involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, under the strong leadership of the chair. Demanding performance management targets are set for the headteacher who, in turn, expects the staff to support him in achieving them. In all these ways, the school uses its high expectations and ambitious targets consistently to raise standards. It has, consequently, an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children experience an excellent start to their schooling in the Foundation Stage, where there has been significant and recent improvement. Teachers and teaching assistants work together very effectively to provide a calm and welcoming environment into which children settle very quickly. Children enjoy the good range of learning activities taking place both inside and outdoors. The curriculum is planned well and each child's learning experiences are carefully monitored to ensure that they have a good balance across all areas of learning. Staff monitor children's progress carefully and adults know at any time how well each one is doing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop meaningful links across different curriculum areas to make lessons more exciting and to help pupils apply and refine the skills they have gained in individual subjects.

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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?	1
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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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

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?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Knutsford School, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD24 7ER

I very much enjoyed the day I spent in your school recently and I was very impressed by what I saw. I enjoyed visiting lessons, meeting you and your teachers and, most of all, speaking to you about your school. The inspection shows that you go to an outstanding school. All the adults working with you and especially your headteacher form a very strong team and work really hard to provide you with a high quality education. You contribute by behaving extremely well, taking opportunities to learn very seriously and trying hard to do your best. I was very impressed that you are as sensible as you are in the way in which you go about learning, being friends with others and most of all, caring about each other. The result is that you all make excellent progress in your lessons and in becoming sensible young people, ready to go on to the next school and into the future. Those of you I spoke to enjoy school very much and it is clear that you all get on well together and look after each other.

There is very little that needs improving that your teachers have not already recognised and done something about. This is why your school is as good as it is. I am, however, asking the staff and governors to think about linking different subjects together to make learning even more exciting.

I wish you all the best in the future.

David Speakman

Lead inspector