

Redbourn Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117288
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312558
Inspection date	25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Bob Roberts

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	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Wiggett
Headteacher	Mrs Allyson Woodhouse
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2003
School address	Long Cutt Redbourn St. Albans Hertfordshire AL3 7EX
Telephone number	01582 626489
Fax number	01582 626486

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspection of the educational provision evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching, the quality of the care, guidance and support for pupils, and the leadership and management of the school. The inspector gathered evidence from visits to lessons, assessment data and documents, and meetings with governors, groups of pupils and school managers. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Redbourn Junior School is slightly smaller than most junior schools and its roll has dropped a little since the last inspection. The school serves the village of Redbourn and the surrounding rural area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are of white ethnic background and very few of those from other backgrounds are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. A small number of traveller children attend the school. The proportion of pupils who come to the school with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Redbourn Junior School is an outstanding school. The exceptional quality of its provision, including the teaching, the curriculum experienced by the pupils, and the care, guidance and support they receive, all contribute to the outstanding progress that pupils make, both in terms of their academic standards and their personal development.

In its self-evaluation, the school judged the quality of its teaching to be outstanding and visits to lessons during the inspection confirmed this view. There is a strong commitment to making the process of learning as enjoyable as possible. Teachers plan in great detail, but they plan imaginatively, always with an eye to providing stimulation and enjoyment as well as challenge. As one parent wrote, it is a school 'that is constantly trying new ways to improve the teaching'. 'Redbourn makes learning fun', wrote another. Pupils work with smiles on their faces. They work exceptionally well in pairs, or groups, supporting each other closely. Teaching assistants make a vital contribution to the effectiveness of the teaching. One thread that runs through the teaching is the attention paid to guiding children how to think and how to learn. The function of the colour-coded 'thinking hats' is something pupils are easily able to articulate and benefit from.

The curriculum offered by the school meets the needs of the children as individuals to a high degree. There is a very good blend of meeting statutory requirements and at the same time introducing opportunities for creativity. Setting pupils by ability for some subjects works well, and arrangements for lessons in foundation subjects allow the school to make the best use of teachers' specialisms. Master classes for gifted and talented pupils and booster classes for those with difficulties provide very effective challenge or support for pupils who need it. There are additional features of the curriculum that contribute hugely to pupils' enjoyment and development: R Time, when short collaborative activities develop the important qualities of respect and regard for each other; PACT time (Parents And Teachers Together), when pupils share with the class the learning activities they have undertaken at home; and Take 10, when pupils enjoy some energetic activity in the classroom as a break from learning. Pupils begin a foreign language in Year 3 and clearly enjoy it. There is a rich programme of special events, trips, residential opportunities, visitors, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Parents paid fulsome tribute in their responses to the questionnaire that accompanied the inspection to the care and support that pupils receive. One feature was the appreciation of parents whose children have difficulties with their learning. One wrote: 'I commend all members of staff for literally changing our son's and our whole family's lives. School has become a pleasure rather than an ordeal.' Another wrote: 'Everyone has been amazing in all aspects of his support'. Inspection confirmed these views. There is exceptional care and support, especially for those pupils who need it more than others do. Teachers set pupils goals and targets in different ways across the school and pupils have a firm understanding of what they need to do to improve. Senior leaders set challenging academic targets for pupils and monitor their progress carefully, intervening effectively to support those not on track. Arrangements for safeguarding children are appropriate.

This exceptional provision leads to outstanding achievements. The attainment levels of pupils on entry to the school has been rising over the last two years, but before that it was broadly in line with national benchmarks. The overall progress that pupils make is excellent. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007, the overall standards reached were above average.

Standards and progress in science are quite exceptional. In mathematics and English progress is good. The progress being made in lessons visited during the inspection was outstanding.

Besides their academic progress, the personal development of pupils is exceptional. This was also acknowledged in the parents' responses, with many referring to their children's growth in confidence, maturity and independence. 'She has blossomed intellectually and matured into a very independent person' wrote one parent, referring to the 'lovely family atmosphere' in which 'pupils are treated as responsible family members.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are well aware of the wider world, its different faiths and cultures. They have a well-developed knowledge of how to be healthy and they demonstrate in their behaviour a good awareness of safety. A high proportion benefit from the extra-curricular activities offered and the contribution they make to the life of the school, and to the surrounding community, is excellent. The development of excellent social understanding and skills, as well as the opportunities to take responsibility, combine with their academic progress to prepare them very well for the next stages of their lives.

The steady and impressive improvement that has taken place at the school since the last inspection is a consequence of outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher would be the first to refer to the importance that teamwork has played in this improvement, but the high expectations and shared values stem from her. She has been the key figure and is held in high regard by parents and staff. Parents regard her and all the staff as approachable and responsive. She has established a clear vision for achieving the highest academic standards, through excellent teaching that makes learning enjoyable, but at the same time placing an equal value on personal and social development. Other leaders and managers at the school make important contributions and there is a very effective ethos of collaboration. However, there are inconsistencies in the way the coordinators of foundation subjects fulfil their roles. Planning at this level lacks sufficient detail and needs to be more focussed on outcomes for pupils. Governors support the school very well and challenge appropriately. The school offers excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and strengthen the role of subject coordinators in order to further improve progress and standards in foundation subjects.

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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
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?	1
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

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Redbourn Junior School

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. I very much enjoyed my visit to your school and would like to thank you for the friendly way in which so many of you greeted me and spoke to me.

Redbourn Junior is an outstanding school. The most obvious thing about it is how happy people are to be there and work there, including you. There is, as one of your parents wrote to me, a lovely family atmosphere. You clearly enjoy coming to school, you work hard and behave very well. The teaching you receive is excellent. Teachers work hard to make the lessons enjoyable and they succeed in this. You enjoy lessons but also find that they make you really think. The school provides you with opportunities and experiences that suit each of you very well. It is a school where you feel cared for and where you feel safe. The way in which you help each other, and develop your own personal and social skills, is outstanding. You make excellent progress in your subjects and consequently the standards you reach are exceptionally high. Attendance is above average and many of you make an excellent contribution to the school and to the local community.

The headteacher and all the staff at the school are doing a very good job. They work very well together, sharing ideas and are always trying to think of new ways to improve things for you. They know, for instance, that the teachers who are in charge of some of the subjects need to have their roles supported and developed a little more. Many of your parents filled in the questionnaire that was part of the inspection. Almost all of them think very highly of your headteacher and all the staff. They appreciate the way the school has high standards but also wants you to develop as rounded people in preparing you for the next stages of your lives.

I wish you all well for the future.

Bob Roberts

Additional Inspector