

Joydens Wood Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118441
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312941
Inspection date	5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Hallam
Headteacher	Kate Reynolds
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Birchwood Drive Wilmington Dartford DA2 7NE
Telephone number	01322 522151
Fax number	01322 556116

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues: • the impact of strategies to raise standards for boys in reading and writing and for girls in mathematics, with a particular focus on higher-attaining pupils • the impact of the school's target setting and tracking procedures on raising achievement • which aspects of the school might be judged outstanding. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with staff, a governor and pupils, samples of pupils' work, parent questionnaires, observations of pupils at lunchtime and a review of the school's own assessment and monitoring evidence. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail but there was no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Attainment on entry to the school is above average. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language are below average, but have increased steadily over the past three years, as has the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils flourish and make exceptionally good progress, both academically and as well-rounded young people who are confident, independent learners. One parent described the school as 'a well-knit community with excellent management' while another summed it up as 'a wonderful school with a fab team of staff'. Senior leaders are overly modest about the school's effectiveness because their expectations are exceedingly high and they are constantly seeking ways to improve the quality of education for the pupils. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and meticulous analysis of assessment data identify areas where there is room for improvement. This leads to prompt and carefully planned actions, with painstaking evaluation of their impact on pupils' progress.

Pupils' outstanding achievement is reflected in the very high standards they reach in English, mathematics and science. The use of ambitious but realistic targets to secure year-on-year improvement has successfully reduced the gap in attainment between boys and girls in recent years. Current initiatives are aimed at raising standards even further for a small number of boys who were not achieving quite as well as their peers in reading and writing. The Better Reading Partners and Writers' Workshop initiatives are already having a measurable impact on boys' progress as well as increasing their enjoyment. Similarly, the school introduced different groupings and tasks to specifically develop the girls' confidence in mathematics. These are already paying dividends, although it is too early to see their full effect on standards.

Inclusion lies at the heart of the school's success. Every pupil is treated as an individual and adults ensure that their needs and opinions are taken into account when planning work and other activities. For example, the school has invested heavily in purchasing books that appeal to boys in order to foster a love of reading, while pupils have had a major input into choosing new playground equipment and markings for games through the school council. There are first-rate systems for safeguarding pupils and making sure they are happy and well cared for. Pupils say they feel safe and able to talk to an adult if problems arise. Year 3 pupils team up with their Year 6 'buddies', who look after them as they settle in and help them to cope with the challenges of a new school. Year 6 peer mentors help to sort out problems and minor disputes amongst other pupils. Pupils say they do a really good job. The school is diligent about following up absences, with the result that pupils' attendance is well above average. This also reflects their tremendous enjoyment of all that they do at school, not only in lessons but also by taking part in the superb range of extra-curricular activities on offer. The clubs are so popular that the school is struggling to find the fairest way to accommodate pupils' wishes.

When asked why they enjoy school so much, pupils are not just excited about activities such as speed stacking and the many sports clubs and inter-school competitions that take place. They are equally enthusiastic about lessons. As one boy commented, 'Lessons are very entertaining because we don't just sit still and write in books'. How true this is. One of the main reasons why pupils make such good progress is that they are actively involved in learning through practical activities, such as solving problems and carrying out investigations. Many lessons are enlivened by discussing ideas with a talk partner, and there are good opportunities for outdoor learning when the weather permits. In one lesson, pupils were thoroughly engrossed in retelling the legend of The Golden Arrow by re-enacting it – complete with bow and arrow and a computer-generated target. Pupils particularly enjoy the way teachers use the interactive whiteboards to teach them new ideas and skills in an imaginative way. They say this really helps

them to understand new learning, and this was very evident in a challenging Year 6 mathematics lesson about equivalent fractions.

Lessons are planned exceptionally well. Rigorous and frequent assessments ensure that teachers know exactly how far each pupil has travelled in his or her learning journey. Consequently, they plan activities that challenge pupils at their own level. This means that pupils with learning difficulties achieve as well as the most able in relation to their widely differing starting points. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and is a key factor in the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are very well motivated and conscientious and take a real pride in their work. There are excellent arrangements for supporting pupils who find some aspects of learning difficult. Well-briefed teaching assistants provide valuable additional support and guidance for pupils in lessons as well as running purposeful small group activities, such as developing reading skills.

Pupils have individual targets to help them improve their knowledge and skills. They say these are very helpful 'because they show us what we need to do to get better'. Teachers involve pupils productively in checking their own progress and assessing their own and each other's work. Parents are also closely involved in checking their children's progress towards their targets. They value the way the school communicates with them and includes them in their children's learning, although one or two expressed concerns about inconsistencies in the way homework is marked. Parents' appreciation of, and support for, the school are evident in the overwhelmingly positive responses to the inspection questionnaire.

The school offers pupils an exciting curriculum that is relevant to their needs and interests. As well as its crucial emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and computer skills, the curriculum embraces themes such as healthy eating, eco-awareness, appreciation of cultural diversity and citizenship. High quality artwork, musical performances and prowess in sports testify to the outstanding all-round provision. Pupils are enterprising and this helps to prepare them very well for the world of work. Older pupils have set up and run a fruit tuck shop and the Woodies Goodies shop, and all pupils have excellent opportunities to shoulder responsibilities, which they take very seriously. They not only know about the importance of being healthy but do their best to eat a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise.

Joydens Wood is successful because of the very high calibre of its leadership and management, not just at senior level, but across the whole range of subject leaders and teachers with responsibility for different aspects such as assessment, special educational needs and provision for gifted and talented pupils. Governors, too, make an exceptionally good contribution to determining the school's future direction and checking how well it is performing. Terrific teamwork, based on a common purpose and very high aspirations, ensures that the school does not rest on its laurels. Its tireless quest for excellence gives it an outstanding capacity to achieve whatever goals it sets for the future. It is poised to offer a full range of extended services, including after-school care.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that the current focus on improving the achievement of boys in reading and writing and girls in mathematics has a measurable impact on standards.

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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?	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	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	1
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

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Joydens Wood Junior School, Dartford, DA2 7NE

I very much enjoyed my recent visit to your school and I would like to thank you all for your very warm welcome. Many of you told me that your school is excellent and you are right. You make exceptionally good progress and achieve very high standards. Your excellent behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime is a credit to you. I was impressed by the way you take your responsibilities seriously and by your sensible attitudes towards keeping healthy. You are cared for extremely well by all the adults. They help you to become more confident and independent and prepare you very well for your future lives.

Many of you told me that your lessons are fun and that the teachers make them enjoyable for you – I could see how much you enjoy using the interactive whiteboards. The excellent teaching and curriculum are two of the main reasons why you make such good progress. The school gives you many exciting opportunities to learn about different cultures, languages and the environment. I saw some superb artwork on display around the school and was impressed by the successes you achieve in sports competitions and the music festival. I am pleased that so many of you take part in the lunchtime and after-school clubs. You are very fortunate to have such a wide choice, even if it isn't always easy to get your name on the list quickly enough!

The adults who run your school do an excellent job. They all work together extremely well to give you the best possible education they can. They never stop looking for ways to improve the school and have superb systems for checking your progress and finding ways to help you do even better than you already are. I could see that some of the boys are already making better progress in reading and writing, and the girls in mathematics, as a result of the changes the teachers have made. I hope that these changes will ensure that standards are even higher. The school leaders are doing a terrific job of improving the school every year and have some great ideas for the future. I am sure you will help them by continuing to work hard and take a pride in your school.

With very best wishes for your future success,

Carole Skinner Lead Inspector

6 December 2007



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