

The Hermitage Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125022
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315126
Inspection date	24 September 2008
Reporting inspector	George Rayner

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 (total)	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Rudd
Headteacher	Mrs Maria Rimmer
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Oakwood Road St John's Woking GU21 8UU
Telephone number	01483 472047
Fax number	01483 799627

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following areas of its work: achievement and standards, teaching and learning; care, guidance and support and leadership and management, including the capacity to improve. Evidence was gathered from: lesson observations, discussion with staff, the chair of governors, pupils and the school improvement partner; scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and the school's documentation. Parents' questionnaires and additional comments were analysed. Other aspects were not inspected in detail, but the inspector found 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

This school is larger than most primary schools. It serves a housing estate on the outskirts of Woking. Most pupils have White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with statements. Most of these pupils have moderate difficulty in developing social, literacy and numeracy skills. The school has a specialist centre for children with more acute learning difficulties, The Orchard Centre, currently providing for sixteen pupils. The headteacher has been in post for two terms.

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. Satisfactory teaching and learning lead to pupils achieving satisfactorily. Although there is considerable variation in the entry standards of individual pupils, these are above average overall. In most years, pupils' overall standards remain above average at the end of Year 6. Teaching is most effective in English. Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils need to do to succeed in this subject. As a result, progress is good and English standards are well above average. Pupils develop a good vocabulary and range of skills and use these well to write interesting pieces in a variety of styles. While satisfactory, progress is slower in mathematics. Here, teachers do not consistently have high expectations of what pupils can do. Consequently, while pupils develop a sound depth of knowledge and range of skills, they do not always use these well when working independently to solve problems. The needs of the pupils who find it difficult to develop literacy and numeracy skills are carefully identified and effectively provided for, both in the specialist centre and in mainstream classes. As a result, these pupils make good progress in their learning.

The school has some good features. These include pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils enjoy school and show this by their above average attendance, good behaviour and enthusiastic involvement in all that the school has to offer. Pupils live active lives and know why it is important to eat and drink sensibly, although a few do not make healthy choices when choosing snacks. Pupils feel safe. They say that the adults care for them very well and that they are confident they will be given any help that they need if they have a problem. Pupils willingly contribute to school life. They are proud of their school council and say that the adults listen to their ideas. These include ideas for fund-raising activities, such as cake stalls and a 'War Hammer' game. Some pupils said, 'We really enjoy these, but also do them because it's important to help others who are not as lucky as we are.' Pupils' average progress in their literacy and numeracy prepares them satisfactorily for their futures.

The school's leaders have a thoughtful approach to promoting community cohesion and do this well. This is illustrated by some parents who follow a minority faith and praised the school for ensuring that their children's beliefs and customs are utterly respected. Good links with local schools and other organisations, such as a home for the elderly, help the pupils to fit into their own community. Leaders recognise that not enough is done to help pupils to understand the diversity of cultures in the wider community. They are investigating ways to develop links with schools outside the immediate locality.

Since the last inspection, the school has made significant improvements to the curriculum, so that this is now good. Key weaknesses identified then have been tackled effectively. All of the requirements for physical education, including swimming, are now met. Pupils now have good opportunities to use computers to enhance their work in all subjects. Another recent improvement is the provision of French classes in all years. The school has recently begun to introduce a creative curriculum, to enhance learning by letting pupils bring together knowledge and skills from different areas. There are already some good activities, such as one in which a class used an interactive whiteboard to work on fractions. This significantly boosted their involvement and enjoyment, as well as making it easier to understand an aspect of mathematics that many had previously found difficult. Because it is so recent, the school's leaders have not yet been able to evaluate the initiative to ensure that it is equally productive in all lessons.

Extra-curricular clubs give pupils good opportunities to enrich their learning by taking part in a variety of sporting, cultural and creative activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since her recent appointment, the headteacher has quickly identified how the school can improve and has a very clear vision for securing this. This includes an understanding of the need to improve provision for mathematics and also target setting, which has not always been challenging enough to promote good achievement. Most senior leaders only took up their posts at the start of the current term. However, the team is quickly developing into a coherent and dynamic unit. Already, several well-focused initiatives have been introduced, although most are so recent that it is too early to judge their effectiveness in raising pupils' achievement. These include an improved system for tracking and recording each pupil's progress. Staff now have good access to valuable information, but are only just beginning to use it to identify the next steps in pupils' learning. This means that, while the school provides good pastoral care for pupils, making effective use of specialised agencies when necessary, academic guidance and support is only satisfactory.

Subject leaders are enthusiastic and capable, but many are recently appointed and not yet sufficiently involved in evaluating the performance of their areas of responsibility. Therefore, while self-evaluation is giving the school's leaders an accurate awareness of strengths and weaknesses, it is currently involving staff only to a satisfactory level. Governors support the school with commitment and are willing to challenge it when necessary. With the guidance of the local authority governor support service, they have recently reviewed their activities and organisation. This showed that visits to the school were not always productive for supporting and monitoring its work. They have made changes to improve this. Overall, with well-focused strategies, but the impact on standards and achievement yet to develop, the school shows a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise mathematics standards by helping pupils to be better at using their skills when working independently.
- Ensure that teachers make effective use of the information gained from tracking pupils' progress to guide them in taking their next steps in learning.
- Involve subject leaders more fully in evaluating the performance of their areas of responsibility.

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.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

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

07 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Hermitage Junior School, Woking, GU21 8UU

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you. I am grateful for the help you gave, by talking to me and showing me your work. I was able to see that yours is a satisfactory school. Some things about your school are good. One is the way that you grow up. Some of you told me that you really enjoy school. You show this by coming to school regularly, behaving well and joining in well with all of the things that take place. You said that you feel safe and well cared for. You also told me about the good ideas that the school council has for raising money for charities. All of these things really help your teachers.

You make satisfactory progress in your learning. You reach standards that are higher than in many schools, especially in English. I enjoyed reading some of the interesting things that you have written. You make good progress in English, because the teachers know how to help you to do well in this. You are less strong in mathematics. The staff know that they need to be better at helping you to use your skills when you have to solve problems on your own. I have asked them to do this as quickly as possible. Those of you who find it especially difficult to build up your literacy and numeracy skills are given good help. This helps you to make good progress.

I know that the headteacher has only been in your school for a short time and that many other staff are even newer. They have quickly worked out how to make your school even better, though. They are already putting their good ideas into practice. They have improved the way they keep records to show how well you are learning. I have asked them to quickly start to use these well to plan your next steps, so that work is just right for everybody. I have also asked them to make sure that all of the teachers have a chance to take part in checking how well things are working.

Very best wishes for your future lives.

Yours sincerely

George Rayner

Lead Inspector