

Northmead Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125294
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315225
Inspection date	13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrussell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs D Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs D Brown
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Grange Road Guildford GU2 9ZA
Telephone number	0870 2644100
Fax number	0870 2644101

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management, gathering evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and documents. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with children, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors 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

Northmead is a large, three-form entry junior school. It has a higher than average proportion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties or behavioural and emotional needs. Up to fifteen pupils are based in the school's speech, language and communication centre. A lower than average proportion are known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has gained Activemark, Healthy Schools, and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Northmead is a satisfactory school with some good features. In 2007, overall standards at the end of Year 6 fell and were broadly average. Standards in reading and science, however, have been consistently above average. More recently, there have been signs of improvement in the progress that pupils make in other aspects of their learning. Good levels of care and support and a rich curriculum mean that pupils' personal development is good and they enjoy school.

Pupils enter Year 3 with above average standards. Given the standards at the end of Year 6, achievement is broadly satisfactory. More able pupils, however, are still not performing well enough. The school has responded to a steep drop in standards in mathematics and a more gradual decline in writing by monitoring progress more regularly to help identify any underachievement and to pinpoint more accurately what all pupils need to learn next. As a result, lesson planning is improving and more appropriate activities are provided that challenge pupils in their learning. This more effective use of assessment data, along with additional focused support, is enabling pupils to make up lost ground in their learning, in order to reach the challenging targets set for them. Through progress meetings each term, teachers are now far more accountable for pupils' progress. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. Some good lessons were seen during the inspection, which provided particularly challenging activities for pupils, enabling them to make good progress. This was evident in a Year 6 lesson, where more able pupils were challenged to read measurements from different scales, quickly applying their calculation skills. Recent assessments on progress this year are showing an improving picture, particularly in Year 6.

Pupils with specific learning difficulties, particularly those in the speech, language and communication centre, make good progress. The provision for them is outstanding and extremely well managed. Pupils from the centre spend afternoons in mainstream classes, providing them with opportunities to be fully included in the life of the school. In lessons, special needs assistants provide effective support for pupils with learning difficulties. Vulnerable pupils are also very well catered for. A home/school support worker provides effective support for pupils and their families. This is helping to ensure that pupils with social and behavioural difficulties fit into school life. Behaviour throughout the school is good, but slips a little when the pace of lessons is too slow and pupils are not fully engaged. Pupils say that any unpleasantness is dealt with quickly and fairly.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Along with their average literacy, numeracy and computer skills, this prepares them satisfactorily for their future life and learning. Very good pastoral care ensures their safety and welfare. Parents comment on the confidence and self-esteem pupils gain during their time at the school. Relationships are strong. Pupils enjoy school from the moment they arrive and come through the doors. They particularly enjoy trips and topic days, and the opportunities they have for art and music, as part of a good, well-enriched curriculum. Photographs and displays around the school are a testament to this. The school choirs are popular. Along with the school orchestra, they provide good opportunities for pupils to take part in community events. Good links with local schools support these activities, and also provide additional sports' coaching. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. A very large number benefit from very well prepared nutritious school meals.

Pupils are encouraged to play a responsible part in school improvement through the activities of the school council, for example, in planning the layout of the playground and the provision of playground equipment. In addition, pupils are being encouraged to take greater responsibility for their learning and the progress they make. Lessons generally provide clear success criteria, against which pupils can evaluate their progress. These are shared with pupils at the start of lessons but, in some cases, little time is allowed at the end of lessons for them to discuss and evaluate for themselves how well they have done. Pupils have individual literacy targets to work on, and understand how these help them to improve their work, but this practice has yet to be developed in numeracy.

The dedicated headteacher, well supported by her staff, promotes pupils' personal development well and ensures a very caring school. She has taken a determined lead on recent actions aimed at raising achievement and standards in writing and mathematics. Subject leaders are starting to have a greater understanding of the importance of their role. The school is now well focused on monitoring progress and using this information to inform teachers' planning. Monitoring records, however, show that lesson observations have not focused sufficiently on the progress pupils make in lessons when judging the quality of teaching and learning. The school has good links with parents, who are encouraged to play a full part in their children's education. One parent comments, 'Both my children are very happy at the school, and we are very pleased with all aspects of their education'. Governors are supportive of the work of the school but have only recently had the fuller information on achievement and standards necessary to hold the school to account for its performance. The decisive actions recently taken by the school have yet to show sustained improvements to achievement and standards and the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. The school currently has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make the fullest use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning so that pupils, particularly the more able, make good progress.
- Rigorously monitor the actions being taken to raise achievement and standards in writing and mathematics, to ensure their full success.

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	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	1
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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?	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?	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 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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northmead Junior School, Guildford, GU2 9ZA

I am writing to let you know what we found when we visited your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection. We spoke with some of you during our visit and you were always interesting to talk to, very polite and helpful. You spoke very enthusiastically about enjoying school and all of the things in which you take part. Northmead is a satisfactory school that has some good features.

We liked these things the most.

- Standards by Year 6 in reading and science are above average.
- Children who find learning difficult and those of you who attend the speech, language and communication centre are extremely well supported.
- The school makes sure that you are safe and well looked after.
- You behave well, enjoy school and are all very keen to keep fit and eat the right things. Your school meals are really wonderful. It is good that so many of you choose to eat them.
- You go on many trips, have lots of exciting events and many school clubs to choose from.

We have asked the school to work on the following things now. The school looks carefully at how well you are doing in lessons. It must use this information to plan work that is just right for each one of you, neither too easy nor too hard. This will help you all to make the best progress possible. The school wants you all to do better in writing and mathematics. It has plans to bring this about and must check that they are working well. You can all play your part by continuing to work as hard as possible, not forgetting to enjoy school.

We did enjoy visiting your school and watching you learn.

Yours sincerely

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector