

# St George's New Town Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114704
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326056
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	276
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Glen Foster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Carl Messer
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	Canterbury Road Colchester CO2 7RU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206506800
<b>Fax number</b>	01206506801

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## Introduction

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

- the impact of teaching, given the changes in staffing in recent months, on pupils' learning and progress;
- the extent to which the curriculum supports the development of skills such as writing and pupils' ability to think for themselves;
- the effectiveness of subject leaders and the governing body.

Evidence was gathered from: observing lessons; talking to pupils, governors and staff; checking the school's self evaluation records and pupil-progress records; looking at pupils' books and analysing the results of questionnaires returned by parents. 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, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is situated in a residential area of Colchester near the town centre. Most pupils live within walking distance of the school. The proportion of pupils claiming a free school meal is broadly average. The majority of pupils are White British though, at about 12 per cent, the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in most schools. About five per cent of pupils have English as an additional language but few are just beginning to speak English. Pupils' mobility is high and during the last academic year about 25 per cent of pupils joined or left the school at other than the usual start or end of the academic year. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty is above average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties but there are also some with behavioural and emotional needs. The school has achieved the Activemark award and is part of the Healthy Schools initiative. There has been a high turnover of staff over the past year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school because it provides a good quality education for its pupils. Consequently, pupils make good progress, develop into confident and mature youngsters by the time they reach Year 6 and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Their personal development is good. They have a strong voice in the school and their views and opinions are both encouraged and valued. The school council is active in consulting all and makes a good contribution, through its work, to the school community.

Pupils usually begin at the school with standards that are below average. By the end of Year 6, their standards are broadly in line with national averages signalling good achievement. Pupils achieve particularly well in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing, though good for many, is a little uneven as they move through the school. Consequently, standards are a little lower overall in English than in mathematics and science. Whilst the school has a good English curriculum in place, it has not yet developed fully the use of literacy in other subjects. There are some opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects, and hence develop further their writing skills. However, the full scope for developing pupils' writing through other subjects not been mapped out systematically enough to help maximise the use of these opportunities. A new skills-based curriculum, which focuses on developing pupils' capacity for analysis, critical thinking and evaluation, has just been developed. It is well planned and, though only in its first year of implementation, is already beginning to have a positive impact on learning.

The school has focused well on improving the performance of more able pupils. In 2008, the proportion gaining a higher level in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics was a good improvement on previous years. Pupils who find learning difficult are given good support and, therefore, make good progress. Pupils who join the school at a later stage are assessed quickly so that there is no time lost in helping them to make up any gaps in their knowledge and ensure work is set at the right level for their needs. Hence, these pupils also achieve well.

The school owes its success to good leadership and management. The headteacher provides very good leadership and management. He has worked very effectively, with his deputy, to ensure that recent changes in staffing have not had any untoward impact on teaching and, hence, pupils' learning. Staff are clear about the school's expectations of performance and receive useful guidance and support to develop their teaching skills. Teaching is good as a result. Planning is thorough. All lessons not only have clear learning objectives but also well defined criteria by which teachers and pupils can measure how successful they have been in achieving the desired outcomes. Questioning of pupils is often very good. Occasionally, though, the pace of lessons and the level at which work is pitched are not matched as closely as they could be to the needs of different groups of pupils. Overall, however, teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and these ensure that pupils maintain a good focus on the tasks they are given. Support staff provide good assistance especially to those who find learning difficult.

Given the warm and friendly environment and a curriculum that engages their interests effectively, pupils enjoy school and learning. This is reflected in the following comment from a parent: 'the school makes learning fun.' Pupils particularly enjoy reading and mathematics and the many visits and trips organised by the school. However, some find writing difficult and, hence, less enjoyable. Most pupils attend regularly and, overall, attendance is satisfactory. The

school works hard and effectively to encourage all pupils to attend regularly. It meets, and at times exceeds, targets set by the local authority.

The school's leadership promotes community cohesion well, especially in relation to the school and the local community. There are strong links with other local schools and community organisations. These enable pupils to make a good contribution to their local community. Year 6 pupils run the school fete, including doing risk assessments, and choose where the funds they raise should go, so enabling them to learn about local, national and international charities. Pupils have opportunities to think and learn about the wider UK community but the school is aware that it could do more to help them learn about the global community. Behaviour is good and not least because it is well managed by staff. Behaviour improves as pupils move through the school and, by Year 6, pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes to learning are excellent. Good behaviour around the school contributes to pupils' sense of safety. They develop a good understanding of right and wrong and know that bullying and racism are unacceptable. Pupils' good social skills mean they work well together and readily initiate conversation. Relationships across the school are very good. Overall, the school is a cohesive community where new pupils quickly settle in and find new friends.

Pupils are well cared for and looked after, and develop a good sense of how to look after themselves and be healthy. The school provides very good support for those who are vulnerable or have additional needs. It makes good use of external agencies to support pupils' well-being and learning. Parents are very supportive and positive about the school. Support and guidance for learning are developing well. There are good systems to assess pupils' progress and to track how well they are doing. There are some very good examples of marking where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. However, this is not consistently good and sometimes suggestions for improvement are not clear enough so pupils are not sure exactly what they need to do to make their work better. There are good systems for pupils to assess their own and other's work, especially in Year 6, and their involvement strengthens their understanding of National Curriculum expectations.

The school has an accurate view of how good it is. This is because it has a systematic approach to checking its work. Subject leaders are effectively involved in checking planning and pupils' progress and have an appropriate role in observing lessons. Their leadership roles are developing well and the school is effectively supporting those who are new to their roles. Most governors have been in post for less than a year but are grasping their roles with energy and enthusiasm. They are rapidly developing their knowledge of the school as well as their understanding of the requirements of the role. They are well supported by established governors and the school so that governance overall is satisfactory. The school has good capacity to improve because it analyses and uses information from self-evaluation effectively to focus on the right priorities. It is ambitious to do even better and has a good track record of improvement. For example, the school has effectively tackled the issues from the last inspection and taken challenges, such as changes in staffing and governors, in its stride. Most of all, the capacity to improve is good because staff share common and well understood goals and all are clear that any new initiative must have the best interests of pupils at its core.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Maximise the opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects to help improve their writing skills.
- Make sure that pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and that this practice is consistent across the school.

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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?	2
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	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

14 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's New Town Junior School, Colchester, CO2 7RU

I enjoyed visiting your school, and particularly enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons. I would like to thank you for making me feel so welcome. The school gives you a good education and prepares you well for your next school.

These are some of the best things about the school.

- You develop good personal skills and qualities and become responsible and confident by the time you are in Year 6.
- You make good progress and achieve well during your time here.
- You get on well with one another and know how important it is to respect others, especially those who are different.
- Teaching is good and you enjoy learning, especially mathematics.
- Staff take good care of you and work with others to help meet your individual needs.
- Your headteacher leads the school well and works with staff to make your school the best it can be.

I have asked your headteacher to make two improvements so that your good school is even better:

- Provide you with regular opportunities to write in other subjects, and hence improve your writing skills.
- Make sure that you are given clear guidance and advice on how to improve your work.

It was very nice to meet you and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead inspector