

Gaddesden Row JMI School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117101
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326526
Inspection date	19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	49
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alexandra Linley
Headteacher	Mrs Lynette Demontoux
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Gaddesden Row Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP2 6HG
Telephone number	01582 840376
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Gaddesden Row is a much smaller than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above the picture found nationally. These pupils typically experience moderate learning difficulties. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils at an early stage of acquiring English. Pupil mobility is high at the school with a significant number of pupils starting or leaving the school at other than the usual times, often having experienced difficulties at other schools. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the same class as Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. The school received Activemark in 2007 for its commitment to physical education.

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 that provides good value for money. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. Despite significant staff turnover since the last inspection, the school has not stood still. Under the strong and effective leadership of the headteacher, this is a school that has moved up a gear and its good track record of improvement in teaching, behaviour, assessment and target setting indicates that it is well placed to move to a higher level. The school enjoys tremendous support from the vast majority of parents. One parent, who summed up the views of many, put it like this: 'Children come on in leaps and bounds at this school.' The parent is right.

The ability of pupils on entry to the school varies considerably, from well below to above expectations, amongst the very small number of children that start each year. There are great variations in standards from year to year when pupils leave the school. However, most importantly the progress and achievement of pupils is a strength. Higher attaining pupils, those with learning difficulties and those of average ability all make good progress and in Years 3 to 6 progress is at times very good. Much of this is down to the good teaching across the school. Teaching is often packed with pace and makes learning an enjoyable and fun journey. Teachers know their pupils very well and more often than not are skilled at making sure that work is pitched at the right level. Only occasionally is this strong feature not present.

One of the key factors in the school's success is the pupils. They thoroughly enjoy school and are highly enthusiastic and well behaved learners. They attend school regularly, have a powerful voice in shaping school improvement, have an excellent understanding of what is needed to lead a healthy lifestyle and understand personal safety well. Their moral and social awareness and sense of justice is outstanding but their awareness of cultural diversity is more limited. However, there is little doubt that pupils leave Gaddesden Row as well rounded individuals, more than ready for future challenges.

The strengths in pupils' personal development owe much to outstanding care, guidance and support. Pupils' pastoral care and welfare is at the heart of much of the school's work and this enables pupils to thrive as individuals who feel cared for, valued and respected and whose self-esteem and confidence grow and grow. Added to this is good academic guidance which makes clear exactly what pupils need to improve in their work. The curriculum is good because it meets pupils' academic and social needs well. It is vibrant, links subjects together well and provides a wide array of enrichment activities. The school's quest to be even better is recognised in its accurate analysis that improving pupils' awareness of their position in a global community alongside further developing key practitioners knowledge and expertise in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, are exactly the areas that need to be tackled next.

At the core of the school's success lie good leadership and management. The headteacher leads and manages the school very well and has been the driving force behind the continued improvement of the school. She constantly sets the bar of expectation higher in the desire to make this an outstanding school. All staff and governors are committed to helping this vision become a reality. Community cohesion is promoted and planned for well but the school is rightly looking to strengthen this still further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although children are taught in the same class as Year 1 and 2 pupils, their needs are met well. From very different starting points, children of all abilities achieve well. Staff work together effectively to ensure that a good balance is struck between children finding things out for themselves and adult-led activities. Good use is made of the outdoor environment to bring another dimension to children's learning. Staff are good at using ongoing assessments to gauge how well children are learning and to ensure that work is well matched to the very wide ability range of the children. On occasions, the level of expectation and engagement for the more able is not high enough. Children's personal development is promoted well and the older pupils in the class often provide very good role models for Reception children. The welfare of the children is afforded the same excellent priority that is evident across the school and this helps children to settle very quickly into school life and routines. This is added to by the excellent links with parents. The teacher is new to Early Years Foundation Stage teaching and has rightly prioritised her need to further increase her own knowledge of the curriculum and provision and to observing highly effective practice in other settings. The headteacher provides good overall management of provision. She works closely with the teacher in ensuring that children achieve well. The teacher is committed to taking provision on to the next level through increasing her knowledge and expertise of how young children learn best.

What the school should do to improve further

- Promote even stronger community cohesion by improving pupils' knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity and global issues.
- Provide high quality opportunities for key practitioners in the Early Years Foundation Stage to extend their knowledge and understanding of how young children learn best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The varying picture of attainment reflects the very wide ability range of children on starting the school and issues such as pupil mobility. Standards by the end of Year 6 are at times significantly above the national average and at other times below the national average. Standards in English, mathematics and science are currently broadly average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The important feature is that across the school, pupils are achieving well and making good progress because of good teaching and rigorous and challenging assessment and target setting. Progress between Years 3 and 6 is at times more accelerated. Progress in subjects such as history and information and communication technology (ICT) is just as good as in key subjects such as English and mathematics. Equally good is the progress made by the higher attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties because there is challenge and support in equal measure.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils love coming to school and thoroughly enjoy participating in learning and everything the school has to offer. This is reflected in the above average attendance rates. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils' outstanding moral and social development

being outstanding is reflected in their excellent sense of fair play and justice and genuinely caring for one another. However, their knowledge of different faiths, cultures and their position in a global society is a little patchy. Pupils behave well and their contribution to the school community is excellent, helped in no small way by the 'Pupil Voice', a whole school council, which gives them a true and active say in decision making in school; they are rightly proud of their contributions. As one pupil said, 'We really make a difference.' They make a telling contribution to the local community and readily raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have an excellent grasp of what is needed to keep fit and healthy and participate in sporting activities with gusto. They are well grounded in how to keep safe and this includes internet safety. All these factors provide a winning combination in helping pupils to leave school well prepared for the next challenges in their young lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Relationships in lessons are often excellent and this leads to a very positive and purposeful learning atmosphere around the school. A good emphasis is given to pupils learning through 'hands on' investigative tasks which motivate, challenge and enthuse them. This enthusiasm is matched by the teachers who go the extra mile to make learning interesting and fun. Questioning is often incisive and the very good use of technical language sets the bar of expectation at a high level. In most instances work is well matched to the very varying abilities of the pupils in each class. Just occasionally work set for the most able pupils lacks a cutting edge to really push on their learning. There are some excellent examples of marking of pupils' work across a range of subjects which gives clear and pertinent points as to what pupils need to do to improve. However, this practice is not yet consistent enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a curriculum that meets pupils' diverse needs well. It ensures that pupils with learning difficulties are fully included and well supported and in most instances provides challenge and stretches the higher attainers. A real strength is the way in which pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are tested out and strengthened in different subjects of the curriculum and this adds much to pupils' progress and enjoyment. The richness of the curriculum is added to by the teaching of French and a strong emphasis given to sport and to pupils' personal, social and health education. For a small school there is a very good range of enrichment activities that include many after school clubs, a residential visit to the Isle of Wight, a day trip to France for year's 5 and 6 and opportunities to sing at the Royal Albert Hall in London. The school promotes the importance of sustainability well through raising pupils' awareness of ecological issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils thrive in a highly caring, supportive environment where their individuality is recognised and celebrated. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Pastoral care is excellent because staff know pupils' extremely well and go out of their way to ensure their

personal and social needs are fully met. Links with outside agencies are very strong and enhance the school's very good internal mechanisms for supporting and assessing pupils with learning difficulties and those who join the school mid term. Pupils have a genuine voice in the life of the school and it is a voice that is respected. These factors all come together to form a cocktail of pastoral success where pupils feel extremely safe and secure and are empowered to influence school improvement. This is further strengthened by the good academic guidance. Teachers regularly check the performance of pupils of all abilities and set them challenging targets. Pupils, particularly the older ones, know their individual targets well and play an active and important role in setting their own goals for improvement, both in the short and long term.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very good leadership. She has played a pivotal and successful role in moving the school forward at a good pace since the last inspection. This is despite the fact that there have been considerable staff changes. She has not lost sight of the vision to constantly make the school a better place and she has been successful in her quest. There is a strong team spirit and all staff share this vision. The headteacher is rigorous and effective in monitoring teaching, setting challenging targets and analysing test and assessment data. Staff are now developing their skills well in these aspects of school leadership, although they readily recognise this is work in progress. Governance is good because governors are both supportive and challenging of the work and performance of the school. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses of the school and they have accurately identified the need to formalise their visits to the school. This is a school that reaches out to the local community and to all parents to forge a partnership that adds much to pupils' learning. Plans are well advanced to introduce 'Community Voice' where stakeholders will talk to pupils about their role in the community. Links with other schools and institutions are excellent. The school is also committed to further improving pupils' awareness of the world beyond their local community.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
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**

20 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gaddesden Row JMI School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 6HG.

You may remember that we came to visit your school not long ago and I am writing to let you know what we found out. But before I do, I would just like to say a big thank you to all of you for making us feel so welcome, for being so polite and helpful and for sharing your thoughts with us. We really enjoyed talking to the 'Pupil Voice' in assembly. It was good to hear how much you enjoy school, how safe and secure you all feel and how much fun all the different activities the school provides for you are.

You will be very pleased to hear that, like you, we think that you go to a good school. Some aspects are even better. Your teachers make learning an exciting journey and because of this you all make good progress and achieve well. The care, support and guidance you receive is excellent and the curriculum is packed with lots of activities both in and outside of the school day. With so much going on it is easy to see why you all love coming to school. There is another strength of the school that I have not mentioned yet and that is you the children! You behave well, attend regularly, show an infectious enthusiasm, have a real voice in helping the school to improve and have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Well done! Mrs Demontoux is a very good headteacher and all the staff and governors work together well in helping to make the school the success story that it is. But even good schools like yours can get better and I know that Mrs Demontoux wants this to happen. I have suggested that the school provides more opportunities for you to learn about the wider world and different cultures, faiths and traditions and for learning activities for the youngest children to become even stronger. The school will I am sure, make these things happen and you can play your part by continuing to work and behave as well as you do now.

We wish you every success in the future and it was a pleasure and privilege to meet you all.

Martin Newell

Lead inspector