

Field Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117161
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326540
Inspection date	12 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Best

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	206
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	Mr Richard Beeden
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Neal Street Watford Hertfordshire WD18 0WF
Telephone number	01923 227306
Fax number	01923 227306

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how effectively the school is improving pupils' achievement in writing
- how well pupils know what they need to do to improve their work
- how effectively the school uses assessment and other information in setting itself targets for improvement.

Inspectors gathered evidence from:

- observations of lessons
- scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and records
- discussions with pupils, parents, governors, the headteacher and staff
- scrutiny of school policies and documentation
- analysis of parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school situated in the centre of Watford. About 40% of pupils are from White British backgrounds with others from 17 different minority ethnic groups. English is not the first language for nearly half the pupils and two thirds of these are at an early stage of learning English. These proportions are well above the national averages. Other than English, Urdu, Punjabi and Portuguese are the most common first languages in the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils joining the school other than at the usual time is also above average. All these proportions have increased since the previous inspection.

The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and, at present, no pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties. Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. Many children are at the very early stages of learning English or have limited pre-school experience. The school is oversubscribed.

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 is adapting well to the changing needs of its pupils and the area it serves. Expertly led by the perceptive and highly effective headteacher, senior managers evaluate the school's performance and areas for improvement accurately. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and there is a good capacity for further improvement. Developments in the analysis and use of information about what pupils know and can do have helped staff to focus more sharply on what pupils need to learn next. This has paid dividends, especially in challenging the more able, meeting the needs of those with learning difficulties and bringing on those pupils at risk of falling behind. As a result, all these groups of pupils are making good progress and the school exceeded its targets in the 2008 assessments at the end of Key Stage 1.

Achievement is good. Pupils make good progress from the moment they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Those for whom English is not their first language often make rapid progress in understanding and speaking English. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average in mathematics and broadly average in reading and writing. They have been maintained during a period when the proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language has risen year-on-year. The school's focus on letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage during the past two years has been particularly successful in improving children's early writing skills, which have, over time, lagged behind other areas of learning. Staff have rightly identified the importance of building on, and further developing, this good practice in Key Stage 1 in order to maintain the good pace of pupils' progress and improve their achievement further.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and reflect the excellent quality of the school's care, guidance and support for them. The staff team, a number of whom are fluent in pupils' first languages, work closely together and know the children and their families very well. Teaching assistants work seamlessly alongside teachers throughout the school day; they provide pupils with high quality support in all aspects of their personal and academic development so that they have full access to all that the school offers. Parents overwhelmingly express their confidence in the school and are especially pleased that their children thoroughly enjoy school and are making good progress. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles. This is actively encouraged by regular exercise during lessons and in after-school clubs, appetising school lunches and the promotion of healthy eating and drinking.

Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is excellent. The foundations of the school's calm and caring ethos lie in its strong promotion of moral and social values. These are regularly discussed in assemblies and consistently promoted throughout the school day. Pupils are most considerate of each other, and confident in sharing their thoughts and ideas because they know that these will be valued. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary, reflecting pupils' regard for the staff's high expectations of them and their respect for each other. As a result, pupils develop confidence and maturity in their attitudes to work and as members of the school community. These, together with their good progress in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT), prepare them well for the next stage of their education. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and staff are appropriately trained. Pupils have an excellent understanding of keeping safe and, in discussion, express confidence that staff will deal with any incidents promptly and fairly. Attendance is good. The school works closely with parents wishing to take

their children on extended visits to families abroad, to minimise the amount of school days missed. This involves them in helping their children to 'catch up' on their return.

Teaching and learning are good. Relations between adults and pupils are excellent and lessons run smoothly. Staff in each year group plan well together, sharing ideas and resources. This enables new members of staff to settle in quickly and minimise the impact of change on pupils' progress. Teachers' planning takes careful account of pupils' differing needs and builds on their earlier learning. Teaching time is used well and pupils' interest and enthusiasm is maintained through a good mix of practical activities and opportunities for pupils to contribute their ideas and answers. Staff explain to pupils what they are going to learn at the start of each lesson and check this using 'key questions' identified in lesson plans. Discussions with staff in lessons and written comments on their marked work successfully guide pupils as to what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are increasingly confident making their own assessments of how well they are doing and what they can do better, and the school is keen to develop this.

The school provides pupils with a good range of curricular and other opportunities. The national strategies for English, mathematics and ICT are well established and carefully adapted to meet pupils' needs. Visits and visitors support pupils' wider understanding. Specialist sports instructors contribute effectively to the school's provision for physical education in the curriculum and in popular after-school activities. The school celebrates the rich cultural diversity of its staff and pupils through its excellent promotion of community cohesion. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community: they regularly take on special responsibilities in class, in assembly and in the playground. They raise funds for local and national charities and have contributed to the local council's plans for improving the nearby park. The school has good links with the local business community, including the regular involvement of staff from a multinational company as pupils' reading partners. Pupils develop a first-hand understanding of different faiths and cultures when their fellow pupils, parents and staff talk to them about their customs and beliefs, bring photographs and artefacts from recent homeland visits, and prepare and share traditional dishes. The school very successfully reaches out to parents and carers through its bilingual staff. It helps them to gain access to support from external agencies, organises activities to help them support their children, and fosters career development.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's excellent lead provides continuity and stability during a period of change. She enjoys the unreserved trust and respect of parents, pupils, staff and governors, who value her clear vision and practical direction for the school's work. The role of other leaders has developed well since the last inspection and is now good: lessons and pupils' progress are monitored on a regular basis. Procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' standards and progress are becoming well embedded. The data they produce is successfully driving the school's priorities for improvement. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's work, informed both by reports and first-hand observations in and out of lessons, to help it hold the school to account. The process of school self-evaluation involves different members of the school community and informs the identification of priorities for development. The school enjoys close links with its partner providers and other agencies that directly benefit pupils' well-being and achievement. The budget is well managed and staff are deployed effectively to match pupils' needs. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in developing basic skills, although attainment on entry to the Reception classes is still below expected levels. Adults demonstrate a high commitment to

promoting children's safety and welfare. Children leave the Nursery with positive attitudes to learning and are able to sustain interest in tasks for reasonable periods of time. They continue to make good progress in the Reception classes and enter Year 1 with attainment that is broadly in line with levels expected in all areas of learning.

The provision is well led and organised. The good-quality curriculum is based on a thorough understanding of child development. Independence is well promoted through child-initiated activities. Staff have high expectations and provide well-planned activities to give the children confidence to do things for themselves. A good balance between activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves encourages them to become increasingly responsible for their own learning. The indoor learning environment is stimulating and the outdoor areas are delightful: both are well resourced and maximise learning through play. A strong focus on speaking and listening, with lots of opportunities for children to explain to the rest of the class what they have been doing, contributes to children's rapid development of literacy skills. Behaviour is excellent and well managed by adults. Children demonstrate good understanding of routines and settle quickly at the start of each session. Assessment is constant and records are well maintained. Activities are suitably adapted to meet individual needs and additional support provided so that no individual or group is disadvantaged in any way. There is good communication with parents who are kept well informed of their children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve pupils' achievement, particularly in writing, by building on the good practice established in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and monitoring its impact as they move through the school.
- Develop pupils' involvement as partners in identifying and achieving their next steps in learning.

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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?	1
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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	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	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

13 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Field Infant School, Watford, WD18 0WF

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently and for telling us all about your work and the exciting things you do. Field Infant is a good school and you are right to be proud of it. You all work very hard and get on with each other extremely well. Congratulations on your excellent behaviour both in lessons and around the school. Your good manners, careful listening and the way you take responsibility for important jobs in lessons, assembly and the playground are very impressive. Well done!

Many of you do not speak or understand English when you start school but you learn quickly because the staff provide lots of interesting activities to help you learn. You all make good progress and, by the end of Year 2, you are good at mathematics and your reading and writing are coming on well. In lessons, your teachers explain to you what you are going to learn and you listen very carefully to what they tell you. You get on with your work, help each other and answer questions promptly. The staff keep a careful eye on how well you are getting on and explain to you what you need to do next.

Mrs Griffiths runs the school extremely well. Everyone agrees that she is doing a smashing job and wants to do her best for you. The staff take excellent care of you and help you learn really well about being healthy, keeping safe and respecting each other. The school is going to help you improve your writing further by building on the good work on letters and sounds in the Nursery and Reception classes. We have also asked the staff to involve you more in judging how well you think you are getting on with your work and how you can improve it. Both of these need your help and support - we know that you are up to the challenge!

Keep working hard and enjoying school.

Yours sincerely

Mike Best

Lead inspector