

Kingsway Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117168
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326542
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2009
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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)	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Turtill
Headteacher	Mrs Mary Heard
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2006
School address	Briar Road Watford Hertfordshire WD25 0JH
Telephone number	01923 672583
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized junior school with eight classes. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a fifth are from minority ethnic groups. Several pupils speak English as an additional language and a few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is average. The school has the Silver Eco Award and Healthy Schools status. Staff turnover has been high in recent years. The headteacher was appointed 18 months ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school correctly judges its overall effectiveness as satisfactory. Within this picture there are significant strengths and a clear pattern of improvement. The school is emerging from a period of turbulence due to high staff turnover caused by promotions and retirements. Most of the teachers are new and the new senior leadership team has only just been reconstituted. The headteacher has guided the school successfully through this difficult period and provides clear direction. Most of the subject leaders are new to their roles and have yet to have an impact on raising standards.

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards have been rising steadily over the past few years. The provisional results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2008 show that standards are average in reading and writing but below in mathematics and science. The exceptionally high proportion of pupils who found learning difficult also made satisfactory progress due to early intervention and additional support from staff. The school has been concentrating on improving standards in English as a top priority and pupils achieve well in reading and writing. The work produced currently by pupils show that standards in mathematics and science are improving and pupils in Year 6 are on course to attain standards that are closer to national averages. Pupils' progress has been interrupted by staffing difficulties and gaps in pupils' prior learning have impeded achievement.

Pupils' good personal development supports their learning well. They are well behaved, keen to learn and eager to please. Attendance is above average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They know how to stay safe and look after themselves. Pupils learn a good range of computer skills. They develop a sound platform for moving to the next phase of their education.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy lessons and relationships are good. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. Classrooms are well equipped with interactive whiteboards and computers but this technology is not used enough to support teaching and learning. Teachers' explanations are sometimes too long and there are too few opportunities for pupils to investigate, experiment and find things out for themselves. Expectations of the amount of progress that pupils are expected to make are not always high enough, especially in mathematics and science.

Pastoral care is good and pupils are looked after well. They receive good guidance about road safety, dangers associated with drugs and about healthy diets. They are encouraged to take plenty of exercise. Guidance about how they should improve their work is not so clear. Pupils have targets to aim at in literacy and numeracy but they are imprecise and do not accelerate progress sufficiently.

The school promotes cohesion among the local community well. However, links beyond the local community are less well developed which inhibits pupils' understanding of different lifestyles and cultures.

Governors support the school wholeheartedly. Through visits and discussions they monitor the school and get a general understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Detailed monitoring of data to gain a clear picture of the school's performance is not so well developed.

The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the education provided for their children. They recognise and appreciate the improvements that have been made over the past two years.

They are particularly pleased with the good range of after school activities. One comment was typical, 'The children enjoy learning and are making good progress and the teachers are approachable and helpful.'

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leadership team share a determination to raise standards across the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and highly analytical. It correctly identifies the most important areas for improvement. A detailed school development plan includes a strong emphasis on the need to improve provision and raise the standards that pupils attain. A new computerised system for measuring pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy has been introduced. This is used well to identify any pupils who need extra help with their learning. It is also used to set targets for individuals and for year groups but these targets are not sufficiently challenging to accelerate progress or raise standards. Leaders have made a good start on redesigning the curriculum so that lessons are more stimulating and match pupils' interests more closely. The school is emerging from a challenging time when recruiting new staff proved difficult. It is now entering a more settled period and there is greater stability in the teaching force. This is helping leaders to concentrate on developing teaching and learning so that all groups attain higher standards. Signs of improvement, under the headteacher's good leadership, show that the school has sound capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase teachers' expectations of the amount of progress that pupils are expected to make in mathematics and science in all year groups so that standards rise.
- Review target setting procedures so that targets for individuals and for year groups are geared to promoting faster progress.
- Make better use of technology to improve the quality of teaching and learning and provide more opportunities in lessons for pupils to experiment, investigate and find things out for themselves.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although achievement is broadly satisfactory there are some inconsistencies. Pupils tend to make much better progress in Years 4 to 6 than in Year 3. Many of the youngest pupils do not have sufficient mastery of phonics and so the school has introduced a system, based on national guidance, to teach pupils the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent. This lack of sufficient understanding of phonics impedes the development of literacy skills, particularly in the classes for the youngest children. Pupils write neatly and work is well presented. Those who find learning difficult and those who speak English as an additional language are supported well so that they make sound progress, as do the faster learners. In national tests the proportion of pupils who exceeded the national target of Level 4 and reached the higher Level 5 standard was in line with national averages in English and mathematics but below average in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are unanimous in saying that they really love coming to school. They show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example, in relation to the internet or road safety. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity within society is limited. The school has good plans to make links with schools in other countries but they have yet to be fully established. They clearly understand the difference between right and wrong and have regular opportunities to discuss social issues. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is good in lessons, during break times and at lunchtimes. Most take responsibility for their own actions because teachers have clear routines and high expectations of behaviour. Most are developing as confident learners who express their views clearly. They are polite and sensitive to the needs of others. Contribution to the community is good, both in school, through the school council, and in the wider community. Pupils raise money for a range of charities and participate in events out of school such as those at the local hospice. Older pupils relish opportunities to take on additional responsibilities around the school, such as their role as playground leaders. They are extremely proud of this role and take their responsibilities seriously.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are placed in two ability sets in each year group for literacy and numeracy lessons and within each set they are also placed into ability groups. This helps teachers to match tasks to pupils' widely varying stages of development and so all groups learn satisfactorily. Teaching is energetic and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. In all classes teachers are striving hard to accelerate progress but it is often an uphill struggle, especially for pupils who find learning difficult. This is because gaps in pupils' prior learning means that foundations are insecure and have to be strengthened before advances can be made. Faster learners often make good progress but teachers do not always set their sights high enough to generate top quality work. Teaching tends to be over didactic which limits opportunities for pupils to learn through exploration and investigation. Resources are good but technology is not always used imaginatively enough to capture pupils' interest and fire their imaginations. Relationships are warm and friendly and pupils greatly appreciate the support and encouragement given by staff.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the school enhances the curriculum provision and effectively supports pupils' personal development. The school has worked hard on reviewing the curriculum so that it matches the needs of pupils more closely but this has yet to result in the speeding up of the rate of pupils' progress and higher standards in all year groups. Links between subjects are being developed appropriately to provide more opportunities for pupils to enjoy their learning. For example, they thoroughly enjoy the practical approach used in Spanish lessons where good links are being made with mathematics. Pupils particularly enjoy their art and design lessons and opportunities to engage in physical education and games activities. Elements of the music curriculum, especially singing, are a strength and

there are many opportunities to learn instruments. All pupils in Year 4 learn to play trombones and alto horns and soon develop enough expertise to perform in school concerts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Relationships and pastoral care are particular strengths of the school. Systems to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare are robust and as a result both pupils and their parents consider that the school is a safe place. There is good support for learning, both in classes and in small groups and effective use is made of additional help from external agencies. This means that vulnerable pupils and those who find learning difficult receive the help they need to enable them to make satisfactory progress. Although pupils are set targets to help them improve their work in English and mathematics, these are not sufficiently precise or challenging enough to ensure that all groups of learners reach the required levels. Pupils are aware of how well they are performing because teachers mark their work frequently. However, pupils do not always know precisely what they need to do to improve their work. This is because marking does not clearly identify the exact steps needed to reach the next stages in their learning. There are good links with the secondary schools, which facilitate the transfer process and promote continuity in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher leads the school well and is ably assisted by the deputy headteacher. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Prospects for further improvement are positive because staff share a commitment to improving pupils' learning opportunities. Leaders are clear about the urgent need to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards but many teachers are new to the school and have not yet had enough time to make a major impact. Governors are supportive but not sufficiently aware of comparative data on the school's performance to hold leaders to account for standards attained. The issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been tackled with a large measure of success, particularly with regard to improving links with the feeder infant 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?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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

22 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kingsway Junior School, Watford, WD25 0JH

We thoroughly enjoyed the short time we spent with you. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. We thought that you would like to know what we thought of your school.

The school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. You enjoy school and like learning new things. You work willingly but also enjoy having fun. You sing well and many of you learn to play musical instruments. We really enjoyed listening to Year 4 playing their trombones and alto horns. Those of you who find it rather difficult to learn new things get good support for your learning. You make satisfactory progress. You are good at sport and keep yourselves fit by having plenty of exercise. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves and others. You develop a good range of computer skills and know how to use the internet safely. You told us that you particularly like your school because teachers help you to learn lots of new things, the sports facilities are really good and there is a wide range of after school clubs. You and your parents appreciate all the help that the teachers and support staff give you. They try hard to help you to feel happy and to learn successfully. Mrs Heard and all the staff are keen to make the school even better and to make your lessons even more exciting.

We think that there are three main things that would make your school even better:

- raising standards in mathematics and science in all year groups
- making sure that your learning targets help you to make faster progress
- making sure that technology, such as computers, interactive whiteboards and digital cameras, are used more to help you with your learning and also give you more opportunities to experiment, investigate and find things out for yourselves.

We know that you want to do your best and we think that if you continue to work hard you are capable of attaining higher standards.

We wish you every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead inspector