

# Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117266
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326559
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Philip Mann HMI

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	81
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Margaret Owen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Mari Tomaney
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Denham Way Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 9SS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 773189

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326559

**Fax number**

01923 711281

<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School is smaller than most other primary schools. There are 81 pupils on roll, including 21 within the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Pupils are mostly from White British backgrounds, with a very small number from minority ethnic groups and only a few from families whose home language is not English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly similar to that found nationally. The school has recently been through a period of staffing instability.

A playgroup, not managed by the governing body, shares the same site and was inspected at the same time.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is becoming increasingly effective under the good leadership of the newly appointed headteacher. This is a view shared by many parents who have witnessed a number of improvements taking shape within a short period of time. Comments such as, 'I think the new headteacher is helping to breathe new life into the school. She is doing a fantastic job.' represent the views of many as well as that of the inspection.

Pupils attain broadly average standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2. However, past rates of progress have been variable and particularly noticeable in writing and in the achievement of boys. Decisive action by senior staff is already turning these past weaknesses around with the result that good achievement is evident in many aspects of the pupils' learning. The regular involvement of pupils in assessing their work is contributing significantly to this improvement. However, as yet standards are still not as high as they could be.

All pupils are responding well to the positive ethos that has quickly been established. Pupils feel safe and secure at school, they display a thirst for learning and are proud to share their achievements with others. Behaviour in the playgrounds and classes is good. The good relationships between staff and pupils are an emerging strength that is fully recognised by many parents. Citizenship skills are developed well through activities of the school council and pupils value being part of the school community.

The quality of education is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good and sometimes excellent features in evidence. However, this good practice is yet to be fully reflected in a significant increase in achievement and higher pupil standards. The curriculum is appropriate and a range of interesting activities provide good levels of enrichment, both in and outside of lessons. Pupils are well cared for and safeguarding arrangements are robust. Their progress is monitored carefully and teachers provide effective levels of guidance to pupils through their careful marking. The progress pupils make in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is monitored accurately. However, the procedures for assessing the progress of pupils in other subjects are barely adequate and remain a weakness.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with some emerging strengths. Clear direction with a strong focus on learning is now evident. Teamwork is a strong feature amongst the staff and much has already been achieved since the beginning of the academic year. As a result, capacity for further improvement is good. Governors are supportive of the school's work. However, to date they have played little part in monitoring its work or planning for future development. Satisfactory partnerships are being strengthened with other agencies and the local community. However, little has been done to promote community cohesion within a local, national and international context.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Provision is satisfactory overall with some emerging strengths. Achievement is satisfactory overall. The Early Years Foundation Stage staff work effectively as a team to ensure that all children make good strides in their personal development and well-being. Planning is detailed and covers all the areas of learning for these children. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features. A good focus is placed on the teaching of letters, sounds and other

early literacy skills. Appropriate use is made of the outdoor area to enhance learning and link it to work done in the classrooms. Procedures for the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the children's development are very thorough and a significant strength. Leadership and management of provision are satisfactory and the new Early Years Foundation Stage teacher has made a good start in developing provision further.

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

- Improve rates of progress, levels of achievement and standards further by ensuring that the quality of educational provision is consistently good across the school.
- Improve the procedures for assessing pupils' progress by building on best practice within the school.
- Ensure that governors play an effective role in monitoring the school's work and participate effectively in planning for school improvement.
- Take effective steps to promote community cohesion.

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**

Achievement is satisfactory overall. From broadly average starting points in Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress to attain average levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. This is confirmed by the latest unvalidated results from the national tests in 2008 and a review of the pupils' books during the inspection. However, inconsistencies in teaching quality, low numbers of pupils in each year group, variations in the numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and a period of staffing instability have all been contributory factors to underachievement in Key Stage 2. Variations in progress are particularly noticeable in pupils' writing and in the performance of boys. However, inconsistencies in teaching quality are being rectified effectively. Improvements are already noticeable in the pupils' work, with some rapid progress evident. Consequently, the achievement of boys is now satisfactory. Pupils who find learning difficult and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they receive carefully targeted support and regular input from support staff. One parent noted that, 'Maple Cross JMI has made a wonderful difference to my children.'

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupil's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They display a great sense of enjoyment and a thirst for learning, because of all the positive changes being made within the school. Pupils like coming to school and are keen to be in lessons. Attendance is broadly average and improving. Pupils state that they feel safe, secure and know who to go to if they need help or are worried. All pupils respond well to good opportunities for them to develop a healthy lifestyle, for example by participating in the 'Fit for Action' project and 'Feel Good Week'. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors. Relationships between pupils and staff and pupils themselves are now very positive because of the recent emphasis placed by staff on valuing the contributions of all within the school community. Behaviour around the school and in the playgrounds is good, because activities in the classrooms are interesting, the play areas provide opportunities for creative play and pupils

respond well to the new code of behaviour. Poor behaviour and bullying has diminished but are dealt with effectively and sensitively when they do occur.

The School Council allows all pupils to have a 'voice' within the school. It has been instrumental in making many changes to how playtimes are organised and how some aspects of the school are managed. As a result, pupils demonstrate a keenness to be part of the school. They make a good contribution to the wider community, show a growing awareness of the importance of being a good citizen and are appropriately prepared for the next stages in their learning.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Past inconsistencies have led to some wide variations in pupil progress and gaps in provision. However, new appointments and effective leadership are now providing the foundations for more consistent teaching and improved provision. As a result, all lessons observed during the inspection were at least good with some excellent teaching seen for the oldest pupils. This good teaching is starting to address previous inadequacies in pupil achievement in Key Stage 2 but is yet to be fully reflected in higher pupil standards.

Planning is now detailed and learning is effectively matched to the needs of individuals in each class. Lessons are carefully organised and resources such as interactive whiteboards are used well to make learning interesting for the pupils. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to lessons by providing effective levels of support to those pupils who find learning more difficult and those needing extra support and care. Marking is developing well following a revision of procedures and teachers provide good levels of guidance to pupils in what they need to do next in order to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Curriculum provision is satisfactory but improving rapidly. Teachers place a good emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, while ensuring that sufficient opportunities are planned for all other subjects. Themed learning weeks provide pupils with opportunities to make connections between other subjects that make learning relevant and exciting. Pupils' personal development and enjoyment are promoted well through a good range of additional activities and visitors to the school. Teachers and teaching assistants ensure that pupils new to the school, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties enjoy full access to the curriculum. Enrichment activities outside of lessons and learning French provide further levels of interest and opportunity for pupils. The range of opportunities planned for pupils to be involved in community activities, learn about other faiths and other nationalities is satisfactory. However, the planned promotion of community cohesion is insufficient.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are well cared for by staff. Robust child protection procedures exist and all staff and volunteers are vetted effectively. Procedures for monitoring health and safety are adequate and the necessary risk assessments are regularly made. The needs of pupils with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully identified and support plans quickly implemented. The academic tracking of pupil progress is becoming more thorough and the monitoring of progress is particularly detailed in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this is not yet the case for science and other subjects, limiting the ability of teachers to set targets and raise achievement. Pupils say that adults are very approachable if they need help and that they get good support and guidance in their work. For instance, the quality of teachers' marking has dramatically improved to the point that older pupils are able to enter into a written 'conversation' with their teacher about the progress they are making. Very detailed comments clearly indicate to each pupil what they need to do next to improve. Such outstanding practice is providing personalised learning for each pupil. One parent put it like this: 'Each child is treated like an individual and is really cared for and encouraged.'

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The newly appointed headteacher provides good leadership and clear direction for the school's work. With support from a capable deputy headteacher, appointed at the same time, she has quickly established a positive and inclusive climate for learning. The correct priorities for improvement have been quickly identified through accurate self-evaluation. Teamwork is now a strong feature and responsibilities are distributed effectively amongst the small staff team to improve provision and raise standards. As a result, the 'green shoots' of progress are becoming evident in many aspects of the school's work and the capacity for further improvement is good. Challenging targets are being set to raise standards but the full impact of these improvements is yet to be fully realised in pupils' achievements. The plan for school improvement includes appropriate areas for action with a strong focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Governance is satisfactory overall and governors provide useful support to the leadership team and staff. However, to date they have played little part in monitoring the school's work with limited involvement in planning for its further improvement. Little attention has been given to understanding the needs and interests of different groups within the community with no clear strategy for the promotion of community cohesion. Consequently, this aspect of the school's work is unsatisfactory.



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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?	3
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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	1
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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	3
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?	4
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**

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maple Cross Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School, Maple Cross, WD3 9SS

I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome during my visit. It is obvious to me that you all enjoy being at school and find learning fun. I saw much good behaviour wherever I went and couldn't help but notice that you all get on well with each other. Many of you told me that the school has improved, that you are proud to be part of this, and that it is now a happy place in which to learn. I agree with you!

Mrs Tomaney is leading and managing the school really well and she has quickly made a difference to the progress that you all are making to ensure it is now satisfactory. Under her guidance the teachers and support staff have worked hard to improve the quality of the learning experiences planned for you. Much has already been done but there is still more to do so that you can all achieve your best while at school. All of you are now writing with more confidence because the teachers mark your work very carefully against the lesson objectives. Some of you even told me it was like having a daily conversation with the teacher about what you've done well and what you need to do next to improve. This is really helping you all to make better progress in your learning.

The teachers make many of your lessons interesting and provide opportunities for you to work together with your friends. The teachers are going to plan even more interesting activities for you to make all lessons as good as they can be. You have opportunities to be involved in community activities and learn about other nationalities. However, this is something that will be planned more carefully for you in the future.

The staff provide good levels of care and support for you all. The teachers carefully assess your progress in reading, writing and mathematics but in the future they are going to monitor your progress in other subjects as well. The governors are keen for the school to improve and they will be working more closely with Mrs Tomaney and the staff to plan what to do next to make it even better.

Once again, thank you very much for making me feel so welcome and best wishes for the future.

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector