

# Leavesden JMI School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117324
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326574
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 September –1 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roderick Passant

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	223
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>	Mr Mark Collins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Cook
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2005
<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>	High Road Leavesden Watford Hertfordshire WD25 7QZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 484340
<b>Fax number</b>	01923 484341

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is of average size but oversubscribed in most year groups. Historically the pupil population has been less stable than seen in most schools particularly in the junior section of the school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. About 20 pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There are a few pupils in the care of the local authority. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school provides an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision and admits children to the Reception class at the beginning of the year in which they are five. The knowledge and skills, particularly in language and communication, of many children starting Nursery are below, and for some, well below those typically seen in children of this age. The school manages a children's centre providing a range of supportive activities for parents within the local community. The school has gained the Investors in People Award, Healthy School status and Activemark for its sports activities.

## 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. It has the overwhelming support and confidence of parents and their views, and those of pupils interviewed, accurately capture some of the school's key strengths. Parents wrote in warm terms about the school and its improvement, citing its welcoming ethos, the professionalism and approachability of staff, and its calm encouraging environment where their children are doing well. Pupils too, clearly enjoy school a great deal. Three pupils proudly told an inspector. 'We are healthy, well organised, with nice teachers!', 'You'll have a good time here,' and 'There are great clubs and you can have fun while you are learning'.

The warmth of the school's community stems from the friendliness of staff and the way they demonstrate in numerous small adult-pupil interactions their care and commitment for the pupils and their families. For a small but significant number of pupils the school provides a core of calm stability. Through the work of the children's centre, the school is seeking to extend further its work with parents and carers in the local community. There is a strong sense of all the elements of the school 'going in the same direction' as one governor put it, that is, for the benefit and support of all its pupils.

Good attendance reflects the fact that pupils do enjoy learning. They are friendly towards each other and consequently they feel safe in school. Behaviour is good because members of staff are consistent in their high expectations and manage behaviour in a positive way, praising pupils for what they do well rather than nagging them about shortcomings. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and how to look after themselves. They take their roles and responsibilities within the school community very seriously and, through the school council, feel that they have a voice in the school and can make improvements. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. Many pupils have low academic self-esteem and the school works hard to foster their sense of success through the many enrichment and sporting activities.

Pupils achieve well and are making good progress because of the good care and support they receive and crucially because the quality of learning and teaching is good. Teachers have a lively enthusiastic style, which encourages pupils. There is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants who provide effective support to individuals and groups. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties or those at the early stages of learning English make good progress. Teachers share the aim of the lesson with pupils but this is often couched in difficult language so that pupils are not always clear about what they are to learn. Overall standards are similar to those seen in most schools by the end of Year 2. Good progress is now building on this foundation. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average but not yet as high in mathematics and science as they are now in English. A key feature, which handicaps learning in these two subjects, is pupils' limited technical vocabulary. Given their good attitudes to school, the school prepares pupils well for the next steps in their education.

The headteacher leads the school extremely well, evidenced in the significant improvements on many fronts that have taken place since the last inspection. Crucially, learning and teaching, the curriculum, subject leadership and management at all levels have improved and are now good because the headteacher is adroit at helping people develop their skills. She has a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and there is a sustained focus on improving pupils' achievement. The school improvement plan details the broad range of initiatives. However, how the school measures the success of these initiatives is not sharp enough and is

not sufficiently linked to their impact on standards and achievement. The school has good leadership capacity to build further on its existing strengths.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

'My child has just started Nursery and is already eager to learn, asking questions and soaking up all the new information' was how one parent described her child's early experience. Children make good progress through Nursery and Reception and by the time they move to Year 1 most are on course to meet the national expectations for their age. Children achieve well because the quality of teaching is good and staff make learning fun. For example, children enjoy digging for 'jewels' in the sand and counting them out into trays. Staff make every effort to extend language and learning by talking to the children. A particular strength is the way that members of staff plan activities for small groups in order to meet the needs of individual children. There is appropriate emphasis on learning to identify letter sounds and build simple words. This provides children with a secure base for reading and writing and is leading to improved standards further up the school. There is a palpable sense of teamwork throughout the EYFS and children behave well because members of staff make their expectations clear. Good leadership of this area ensures that activities meet the children's needs, including their welfare requirements, and that their progress is monitored closely. The full use of the outside area is restricted by the weather. However, staff has identified that greater use needs to be made of this and there are plans to cover part of the area with a canopy.

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

- Develop and extend pupils' vocabulary, particularly their confidence in using technical language in mathematics and science, in order to raise standards by the end of Year 6.
- Make the criteria for judging success in the school development plan clear and measurable, enabling a more accurate evaluation of their impact.
- Ensure that teachers and pupils are clear about what is to be learned in each lesson and how they will know when they have been successful.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well. They make good progress in the EYFS and through Years 1 and 2, to attain standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Historically, progress in the junior section has been very variable. However, the school's data and provisional test results for Year 6 shows that progress across Years 3 to 6 is now good and building well on the standards at the end of Year 2; standards overall are broadly average. English shows steady improvement because of the school's longer-term focus on writing. The school's work to improve mathematics and science is more recent and standards are not as high in these subjects as in English. The school's leaders have identified that part of the problem in these subjects relates to pupils' limited vocabulary. As a result, there is now a sustained focus across the school on improving pupils' technical language. Pupils who find learning difficult, or who are at the early stages of learning English, do well and make good progress because of the quality of support they receive.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils have a clear idea about right and wrong, and are given good opportunities to think about other people, respecting their culture and values. The small number of pupils who find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour are supported well. The school takes a strong stance on any form of bullying or deliberate unkindness. Consequently, there is very little bullying or name-calling and if it does occur, pupils follow what they have been taught. That is to walk away and, crucially, tell an adult. Sometimes, older pupils can be easily distracted when they are working independently. This is because some of the older pupils have not had sufficient opportunities for this when they were younger. They have a good appreciation of others' feelings through the personal, social and health education work in the curriculum. There are many opportunities to work in groups and teams, developing pupils' social skills well. The rich curriculum broadens their horizons. The school works hard to foster pupils' belief in themselves, recognising that low academic self-esteem and limited aspirations erodes their learning. Assemblies make a good contribution to the school's values and pupils' spiritual development. They have an excellent understanding how to keep themselves healthy and how to look after themselves.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers have high expectations and use assessment effectively to ensure that they meet the needs of all pupils through well-matched tasks. A lively and enthusiastic teaching style motivates pupils to try to do their best. Good relationships mean that pupils are willing to ask questions and indeed make mistakes because they know that they will be helped, not scolded. All members of staff manage behaviour very well because they have consistent expectations. In some classes pupils are beginning to assess whether they understand new learning, either by a simple 'thumbs up' with younger children, or older ones undertaking a more detailed review of their understanding of a unit of work. Teachers explain to pupils what they are to learn in lessons. However, sometimes these learning objectives are not specific enough or in language easily understood by the pupils. Consequently, they do not always have a good enough understanding of what they are learning or when they have achieved success.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy studying a wide range of themes, such as 'Feeling Good' and 'Black History Awareness' during specially planned weeks. These contribute well to their personal development. The school has a good personal, social and health education programme that helps pupils to understand feelings and to learn social skills. A rich range of extra-curricular activities, for example, street dance and golf, enriches the curriculum. The school makes every effort to provide opportunities that many pupils might not otherwise experience. Older pupils learn to speak French and all pupils in Year 4 learn a brass or percussion instrument. A review of the curriculum has led to improvements in planning, incorporating the latest national guidance for literacy and numeracy. Pupils use information and communication technology to support their learning but opportunities to develop this further across the curriculum are not always identified.

The school uses a wide range of support programmes to help those pupils whose progress is slipping.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' progress is monitored very carefully. Staff meet regularly to discuss where pupils are in relation to expectations for their age, set targets and decide strategies to support them. Pupils are helped in some classes to take responsibility for their work, but this not yet a consistently developed feature across the school. Pupils who find learning difficult or those who have specific learning needs are supported well. The school identifies higher attaining pupils and plans are in place to provide further support to enable them to reach their full potential. The school is a safe environment and careful attention is given to risk assessments, safeguarding issues and child protection. The needs of those children with specific medical requirements are handled with sensitive care. The school works closely and effectively with specialist agencies to support the needs of individual pupils. The school breakfast club and after-school provision make an effective contribution to pupils' personal development.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is welcoming and supportive of all pupils regardless of need and works hard to reduce their difficulties in learning. It actively fosters pupils' strong sense of community, within and out of school and through its work in French, a sense of European awareness. Subject and other school leaders understand the school's bigger picture and their role within it. They undertake careful analysis of test papers to identify weaknesses in the teaching programme and ways to address these. There is a very strong sense of teamwork across the school. Members of staff are supportive of one another, share the same basic values and recognise their accountability for the progress pupils are making. How the school judges the success of initiatives in the school plan are not yet sharp enough, nor are they sufficiently linked to standards and achievement. A number of governors are new but already there is a good understanding of their role with regard to strategic development and providing appropriate challenge and support to the school. Governors have undertaken training and as a result, have recently adjusted their pattern of visits to give them a sharper focus.

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**Annex A**

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	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**

2 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Leavesden Green JMI and Nursery School, Leavesden, WD25 7QZ

Thank you for making me so welcome in your school. My colleague and I enjoyed our visit very much. My particular thanks go to those pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk to us.

You are rightly proud of your school. We can see why you enjoy school. We agree with you that your teachers are nice, they work hard to make learning fun, and there are lots of clubs to enjoy. Indeed all adults in the school care about you a great deal. We think you behave well and you are very friendly towards each other. You said you feel safe in school. We are glad that you are confident to tell an adult if something is worrying you. It was also good to hear that staff would sort any problems out.

You are making good progress in your learning. Standards at the end of Year 6 are similar to those seen in many schools. They could be even higher, particularly in mathematics and science and staff are focussing attention on improving these subjects. The school is helping you to mature well. Teachers are skilled. They share with you what they want you to learn in their lessons but sometimes the language they use is a bit difficult. We have asked Mrs Cook to work with the teachers to make sure the aims for lessons are very clear so that you know when you have been successful. Mrs Cook, the governors and staff draw up a plan, which shows all the things they want to do in the school to improve it. We have asked them to ensure that the plan indicates to everyone when they have been successful. This will help them to make the link more clearly between what they are doing and how it will improve standards.

The school has made many improvements in the last two or three years because Mrs Cook and other teachers lead the school well. They want to improve the school even more so that the school becomes an even more exciting place. They will be able to do this all the quicker if you continue to help them, as you are doing, by working hard.

All good wishes for future school careers.

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector