

# Holtsmere End Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117336
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326578
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April –1 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Cheryl Thompson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs B Whitford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Pat Evison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 May 2006
<b>School address</b>	Shenley Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP2 7JZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 253189
<b>Fax number</b>	01442 213695

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average junior school serving its immediate locality. Numbers on roll are falling due mainly to parents' moving out of the catchment area. Attainment on entry from the infant school, which is on the same site, is above average. Pupils who join the school at times other than at Year 3 have a wide range of attainment. The majority of pupils are White British with just under a quarter of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language, although none are at the early stages of acquiring the language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning is broadly average.

In partnership with the infant school, the school has organised a breakfast and after-school club which is run on the premises. This provision is not run by the schools' governing bodies. It was inspected at the same time as the school and is subject to a separate report.

The school has gained the Activemark and Healthy School awards.

## 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. It has good features in the strong pastoral care and guidance it provides and pupils' good personal development. Parents are rightly appreciative of the care the school offers. Comments, echoing the views of many, included: 'very good school, offering lots of fun activities;' 'my child is very happy at school and developing not only academically but also in self-confidence'.

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy; consequently, they are keen to take part in all the sporting activities on offer. Pupils' social skills are outstanding. They respect others and work together happily and productively. These personal qualities, together with their sound basic skills in literacy and numeracy, prepare them appropriately for the next stage of their education and their future lives.

Standards attained in Year 6 national tests have dropped since the last inspection for two main reasons. The number of pupils joining the school at times other than at Year 3 has increased considerably in the past two years. These changes brought challenges the school has not had to deal with before, such as high absence rates for individuals and significant behavioural difficulties. The headteacher, acting assistant headteacher and governors are relatively new to their roles, which they are developing appropriately. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Standards are beginning to rise again to satisfactory levels and this demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. From the time pupils start in Year 3 and leave at the end of Year 6, achievement and progress are, currently, satisfactory. Pupils who need extra help with their learning do well, as do pupils who speak English as an additional language. The new systems for monitoring teaching, learning and pupils' progress are good but, as yet, they are not used rigorously enough to ensure that all pupils make consistent progress through the school. The underachievement of a few more able pupils has been halted but there is more to do to increase the rate of progress for all in order to raise standards further.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with significant strengths in the outstanding relationships between staff and pupils. Consequently, pupils are very positive about learning and behave well. They take advantage of the sound curriculum and particularly enjoy activity and themed weeks. The new system of identifying pupils who are not doing as well as expected is beginning to have a good impact. However, there remains an inconsistency in teachers' planning which means that, on occasions, there is insufficient challenge in the work provided, especially for more able pupils. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils' work is marked well but targets set for pupils are not always sufficiently clear to help them move on at a good rate. The school's success in ensuring it is a cohesive and inclusive community is good. It has good links with organisations locally and with international students so that pupils have a growing awareness of what it means to live in a global community.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) by ensuring that more able pupils do as well as they can.
- Apply more rigour to monitoring pupils' progress and the quality of teaching to ensure consistent and good progress as pupils move through the school.
- Ensure consistent challenge, especially for more able pupils, by identifying appropriate work in teachers' planning.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards in national tests for Year 6 are average in English, mathematics and science although there has been good progress in writing given these pupils' below average starting points. Standards have dropped since the last inspection when they were above average. The decline in standards is the result of increasing mobility within the school population and also considerable staff changes. School data indicates historic underachievement, mainly for more able pupils. Recent actions taken by the new leadership team have halted this underachievement but the full impact of new initiatives is yet to be seen in improved standards and a better rate of progress, especially to the higher Level 5. School data indicates that boys do less well than girls. Evidence at the time of the inspection indicates satisfactory progress overall for boys and girls from the start of Year 3 to the end of Year 6. The good progress pupils make in Year 6 helps to make up for some historically slower progress in other year groups. Standards in ICT are broadly average. The lack of reliable hardware is an ongoing problem for the school. Consequently, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use computers and to develop their skills at a good rate.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are fine ambassadors for Holtsmere Junior School. They are polite and friendly to visitors and to each other. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel safe from harassment. Levels of enjoyment in lessons are high, especially when teaching is good or better. Even when teaching is less engaging, pupils' behaviour remains good and they are willing to work hard. Indeed, when teaching is outstanding and in assemblies, their behaviour is excellent. Behaviour outdoors is good and pupils enjoy the well-supervised break times, taking on a range of responsibilities such as peer mediators and play buddies to good effect. The school council gives pupils an appropriate understanding of life in a democracy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff underpin pupils' confidence and very positive attitudes. Teachers manage their pupils very effectively so that classrooms are calm and purposeful. Planning is satisfactory, with good use made of first hand experiences, such as visits to local shops, to make learning relevant. However, planning for groups set according to prior attainment does not always identify challenging work for the more able pupils in the groups. Pupils who need extra help with their learning do well. Under teachers' guidance, proficient teaching assistants provide good support to ensure good progress and self-esteem for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

High quality personal, social and health education contributes strongly to pupils' good personal development. Provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language and for those who need extra help with their learning is good because their needs are assessed thoroughly and appropriate work and support are provided. There have been problems with the provision for ICT for example, ageing computers and an unreliable wireless computer network have meant that resources have not improved until very recently. This setback has had a restrictive impact on teaching and learning. A new computer suite is planned for September 2009. The curriculum has adequate breadth and balance and is enlivened with activity weeks and trips. In Year 6, in the period leading up to national tests, extra lessons in literacy and numeracy substantially unbalance the curriculum. The range of extra-curricular enrichment is chiefly restricted to sporting activities but these are of good quality and available to all. French has recently been introduced throughout the school and there are plans to evaluate its impact in the near future.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care for pupils is good because the school staff have worked hard to create a safe and caring place of learning. Academic guidance has fallen a little short of this standard because pupils' progress has not been monitored rigorously enough to ensure steady and consistent progress. Policies relating to the care of pupils comply with statutory requirements. The good links with neighbouring schools ensure smooth transition between stages. Levels and quality of supervision at break and lunchtimes are good, ensuring the safe welfare of pupils. A small number of parents voiced concerns about bullying in Years 5 and 6. However, during inspection no incidents were noted and pupils expressed confidence that, if they had concerns, they would be promptly dealt with by staff.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and acting assistant headteacher are relatively new to their roles but already have a sound understanding of what needs to be done to build on the school's good reputation within the community and improve the school further. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The success of their very strong focus on pupils' personal development is clearly evident in the welcoming and inclusive school community. Community cohesion is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of the range of cultures within their school and beyond because the school has good links with a wide range of organisations and parents are encouraged to share their cultural traditions. Parents' and pupils' views are sought regularly and acted upon. Together with the infant school which shares the site, the school has organised before and after school provision in response to parents' views.

Governance is satisfactory. Although there is a completely new governing body since the last inspection, governors are developing their roles competently. They are keen to increase their understanding of pupils' standards and progress further so that they can hold the school to account more effectively.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## 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>	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**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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	1
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

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

5 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Holtsmere End Junior School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7JZ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school a little while ago. A special 'thank you' to those of you who gave up part of your dinner time to talk to us. We were pleased to find how keen you were to share your thoughts about your school. This letter is to tell you what we found out about it.

Yours is a satisfactory school where your teachers help you to make sound progress. We thought you behave well and were impressed with your good manners. You told us that you enjoy school, your clubs and activity weeks. The adults take good care of you and work hard to provide a safe and caring place for you to come to.

To help you do even better we have asked the school to:

- keep a close check on how well you are doing and to make sure you make good progress each year as you move through the school
- help you do even better in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology
- make sure teachers include in their plans work to make you think hard.

I hope you continue to enjoy school and work hard for your future.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector