

Manor Fields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117380
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326591
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	471
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	Mrs B May
Headteacher	Mr S Connors
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Penningtons Bishop's Stortford Hertfordshire CM23 4LE
Telephone number	01279 757193
Fax number	01279 461817

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Actions taken by the school to raise standards in writing and mathematics.
- The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and how well they achieve.
- The impact of the curriculum, especially regarding the creative arts.
- The impact of recent changes to leadership teams and their effectiveness.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with the chair of governors, staff and pupils, samples of pupils' work, and scrutiny of the school's documentation, including tracking and assessment data. 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 in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Manor Fields is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average and socio-economic indicators are positive. Broadly average numbers of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds but few are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social needs, autism or speech and communication difficulties. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided for by a Nursery and two Reception classes. The attainment of most children when they start school is generally above that expected. The school has a Healthy Schools award, an Activemark award and is working towards an information and communication technology award.

Breakfast and after-school clubs and holiday care endorsed by the school are run in local community centres but are not managed by the governing body and are inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Since it opened it has been very effectively led by the current headteacher and his leadership is characterised by a continuous search for improvement and to do the best possible for the pupils in his care. This ethos infuses all aspects of the school's work and has resulted in excellent improvements since the last inspection which demonstrate clearly that there is an outstanding capacity to maintain the current high standards and improve still further.

As would be expected in such an effective school, a large majority of the parents are very happy with how well their children are doing. One said, 'As a parent I am confident my child's education is first-rate.' Even so, a significant minority expressed some concerns over communication with the school. This is not supported by the inspection findings. The school has a good, informative website and uses electronic means to communicate with many parents. Other newsletters and information regarding the work of the school are of high quality. The school has shown that they take parents' concerns seriously and respond well. For example, it responded to parents' suggestions regarding pupils' reports and the timing of parents' evening. The school has said it will investigate this issue and find out more about exactly which aspects of the links between home and school may need some improvement.

The school's success is demonstrated in its consistently well above average, and often exceptionally high, standards. Although many of the children who start at the school have knowledge and skills in many areas that are above those expected, there is no complacency. The excellent provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is recognised by the parents. One said of her daughter in Reception, 'She is extremely enthusiastic every morning and absolutely relishes all the activities and educational opportunities afforded to her.' The children make outstanding progress and reach high levels in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year, although skills in aspects of mathematics remain a little below the other areas, and this has been the case throughout the school for some time. The pupils' excellent progress continues throughout the school in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 2 and often exceptionally high at the end of Year 6. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to maintain these high standards and in mathematics they are likely to achieve exceptionally high standards this year as a result of improvements made to the provision. Standards in the arts subjects such as art and design, music and drama are also outstanding. All groups of pupils, including those who find learning difficult, make excellent progress from their starting points. In Year 6 in 2008 for example, a significant proportion of the pupils with specific learning needs made progress in English and mathematics that was well above that expected.

Pupils' excellent achievement is the result of high quality teaching and an outstandingly well-planned and imaginative curriculum. The staff make an innovative and enthusiastic team and this enables them to mentor and support a good number of newly qualified teachers very successfully. There is a wide variety of experience and skills among the staff, and where necessary this is augmented by bringing in outside expertise. Numerous visitors help to enrich pupils' experiences and provide additional expertise. This happened, for example, during a recent science and mathematics week long project. Sports and music teachers regularly visit the school. Teachers have excellent relationships with the pupils and this ensures that lessons run smoothly and pupils behave well and have excellent attitudes towards learning. One said, 'Teachers encourage what we are good at.'

Teachers' lesson plans effectively ensure that all pupils receive appropriate work that is sufficiently challenging and interesting to maintain their enthusiasm. The major strength of the teaching and the curriculum is the school's work in the creative arts. This has been recognised more widely in a university study of the innovative curriculum undertaken for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The planning effectively links subjects so that skills learned can be transferred. In one Year 4 lesson, for example, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and the teaching of leading healthy lifestyles were all linked in one task. The school sets a high priority on its work in the arts, including drama and music, and this leads to some excellent work not just within the school but also with other schools locally. The partnerships with a range of outside organisations are a major strength in extending pupils' horizons and also lead to the dissemination of good practice.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is led and managed with equal value given to standards and achievement and to pupils' personal and social matters. Because of this, pupils' behaviour is often excellent and their attendance is very high. This is because they enjoy school so much and have developed such positive attitudes towards learning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This was evident in an excellent Year 2 lesson observed, where, after evaluating their own work, children confidently and effectively assessed the work of their peers, giving them praise and also ideas for improvement. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet. Their high levels of basic skills and the excellent learning habits they are developing mean they are outstandingly well prepared for their future education and life after school. This is also helped by projects such as mini-businesses like those run by Year 6 when they meet local business people, learn to design, develop, make and market a product. Pupils, especially the older ones, make an outstanding contribution to the school community, with many opportunities to take responsibility and help in school decision making. They also make a significant contribution to the local and wider community through taking part in joint events such as sports and musical activities, and in raising money for a wide range of charities.

The school provides the pupils with excellent care, guidance and support. All safeguarding requirements are met and the systems for taking care of pupils are robust and effective. Pupils say there is no bullying and they feel safe in school, and when in the care of the staff on visits. The school has excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress and assessing and recognising any who are in danger of falling behind. Target setting is very effective and pupils are very clear about how they can improve their work. This has been helped by the improvements made to the marking of their work since the last inspection. The support given to those with learning difficulties, to the small number at an early stage of learning English and to those with particular gifts and talents is very effective in helping them all make excellent progress.

The school is very effectively led and managed through an excellent structure of leadership, middle manager and subject teams. Areas for improvement are analysed and addressed effectively. This is evident in the improvements made to standards in mathematics. Outside expertise was sought, new ideas taken on board and appropriate training provided. The impact of much of the school's work is analysed in some depth and self-evaluation is accurate. However, although the school is doing much to promote community cohesion by ensuring pupils have a good understanding of issues at a local and global level by, for example, the link with a school in Venezuela, issues regarding the multi-cultural nature of our country are less well-developed and the school does not yet have clear systems for auditing the success of its work in this area. The governing body has strong links with the school. Governors are very effective in holding

the school to account and have a clear understanding of major strengths and areas for development. A good number are regularly involved in school life and in checking the success of initiatives.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The school helps its children make an exceptional start to their educational lives. The inspiring and well-resourced environment is very well managed to give every child access to the full range of Early Years Foundation Stage experiences. Good systems are in place for ensuring that children settle happily into their classes. Parents are welcomed into the setting in order to build strong relationships with their child's key worker. Children enjoy coming to school and confidently participate in creative activities such as making footprints with Wellington boots and paint, which stimulate their desire to explore the world. They are encouraged to develop the full range of literacy skills by role play activities such as buying and selling in the shoe shop, thereby learning how to relate to each other and to speak and listen to one another. Their confidence in speaking and listening successfully inspires the children to attempt the well planned writing activities. Adults calmly but very effectively interact with the children to encourage them to develop appropriate language. Through their own enthusiasm, they inspire a love of books and stories. Opportunities to develop mathematical skills are seamlessly integrated into the activities children choose to do. Children are taught how to stay safe and they have a thorough understanding of what they need to do to be healthy. Although the children enter this exemplary setting at starting points which are above those expected nationally, the leadership supports the staff team to help all children make significant gains in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the pupils' understanding of the wide range of backgrounds that form our national community and devise systems for evaluating the impact of the school's work to promote community cohesion.

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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?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Manor Fields Primary School, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 4LE

I am writing to thank you for your help when we visited your school recently. You made us very welcome and were most helpful in telling us about the things you enjoy doing there. I hope those of you who went enjoyed 'The Lion King' last night.

I am also writing to tell you what we found out about your school. We think your school is outstanding and you are very lucky to go there.

It is so good because of these things:

- it is very well led by Mr Connors and the senior teachers
- the teachers work very hard to make sure all of you learn lots of new things
- they devise a lot of interesting and exciting things for you to do, like special events, clubs, musical activities and trips and visitors
- you are very well behaved and have excellent attitudes towards school. This helps the teachers plan interesting lessons
- you reach very high standards by the time you leave the school
- the school helps you become good learners and very well developed and mature young people.

To help make it even better in the future we have asked the school to help you learn more about how different peoples live in this country, and to judge how well they teach you to be part of the local, national and worldwide community.

Thank you again for your help. Enjoy your time at Manor Fields and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector