

Murston Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118353
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339203
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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 of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Wiles
Headteacher	Maggie Laming
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and also dipped into all classes during guided reading time. The choir was heard singing and art work was evaluated. A sample of pupils' English, mathematics and science work was evaluated. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and two governors. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a variety of documentation, including the school's development plans, assessment information and policies. Information about safeguarding was also evaluated. Inspectors received and analysed 15 parental questionnaires; as this was a very small response from parents, the lead inspector also looked at the findings of a recent parental survey, which was conducted by the school earlier in the term.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well leaders and managers are improving pupils' attainment and achievement in English
- pupils' achievement overall, especially how well pupils with special educational needs and learning disabilities achieve, particularly boys
- attendance and how well this is improving
- how well the wider curriculum helps to enrich the learning outcomes for pupils, especially through art and singing.

Information about the school

Murston Juniors is a smaller-than-average-sized school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although a few come from Polish, Portuguese and Asian backgrounds. The school has a greater-than-average proportion of pupils joining at times other than when they first start at school, including a small number of Gypsy Roma Traveller pupils. More than half of the school have special educational needs, which most often relate to moderate learning difficulties, behavioural or emotional problems, or speech and language difficulties. Within this, a very high proportion receive more intensive support. An above-average proportion of pupils receive free school meals. The school has gained Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSiS), Investors in People, Healthy School, Activemark and Artsmark awards and the Silver Eco award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Murston Juniors is a good school where pupils are well cared for and enjoy learning. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders have worked very successfully to raise standards from an exceptionally low level prior to 2007 to become average in English, mathematics and science. The care of pupils is good overall and is especially impressive for vulnerable pupils. Staff know the pupils well and provide good lessons and interesting learning activities.

Pupils start school often with skill levels much lower than average; they make good overall progress in developing the basic skills and interests for their future lives. They benefit from a well-rounded education, which enables them to learn new hobbies, develop healthy lifestyles and gain an understanding about how to be safe in the wider world. The school successfully helps pupils to find their talents and this is celebrated well on the huge 'Everyone is good at something' display; this helps pupils to grow in self-esteem. Pupils are helped to make an outstanding contribution to the community. The quality of pupils' singing and art is high, and these activities contribute much to pupils' good spiritual, cultural and emotional development. As one pupil said, 'Singing makes me feel good inside.'

The school has a good capacity to continue developing because teamwork is strong and leaders evaluate the work of the school well. Leaders are driving developments forward, as evident in pupils' recent rapidly improving achievement and higher rates of attendance. As a result of the school's good self-evaluation, development planning and actions to bring about change, the quality of teaching and learning has improved in science and reading. Leaders have also raised standards in writing by giving pupils more meaningful and interesting writing activities and by offering more occasions when pupils do extended pieces of writing. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to go back over their work to edit and improve their skills. The inspectors found that pupils' handwriting, especially boys', is not good enough to ensure that they can write quickly and neatly. Leaders are in the process of reviewing the handwriting policy so that pupils do more practise. Pupils' progress in mathematics is good overall but sometimes, pupils just miss gaining higher-level results. This is because they find it hard to discuss and record each step of their thinking when working out how to solve mathematical problems. Plans are already in place to improve this through what the school calls the 'talking to learn' project.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase opportunities for pupils to edit, extend and improve their writing so that

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standards continue to rise.

- Provide daily handwriting practice, so that pupils become faster and neater in their writing.
- Help pupils to discuss and record each step of their thinking when they are working out how to solve mathematical problems, so that more pupils reach high levels of attainment by July 2010.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Most pupils show positive attitudes and the behaviour of almost all pupils is good. A very few pupils find it harder to behave well and this is often because they have more complex special needs. Pupils with special educational needs and those with learning difficulties achieve well, including both boys and girls. Within this, many receive very focused support and they often do especially well.

Pupils enjoy learning and this contributes to their good achievement in reading, science and mathematics. For example, pupils enjoyed making story plates to summarise their reading about the ancient Chinese 'Willow Pattern' story. In one very exciting science lesson, pupils acted as criminal crime scene investigators. Here, they measured the diameter of blood droplets (red paint only) to see if the splatter could tell them anything about the height of the suspect who had hit the victim. Pupils work well in groups and share their ideas but they often find it hard to express their views with clarity. Teachers work hard to help pupils to learn new vocabulary and use more complex sentences; this sets pupils up well for writing.

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was especially evident in the respectful way that they led the prayers, read poetry and sang 'No Tears will Stop us Singing' in the Remembrance Day service with members of the Royal British Legion. Pupils take part in many fund-raising events. They produce a very high quality calendar each year and newspaper called the 'Murston Messenger'. Pupils cook regularly and this helps them to understand about healthy foods. Pupils enjoy being enterprising by making things for events such as 'The Spirit of Christmas Winter Fayre'; this helps them to learn about how to manage money. Pupils take part in many sports, dance, drama and musical productions, which promotes teamwork and confidence.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are carefully planned. Resources, including computer technology, are well organised to help pupils to learn in different ways. Teachers fully understand that pupils need plenty of opportunities to talk through their ideas before writing and they ask thought-provoking questions that probe pupils' ideas well. This helps them to use longer sentences and interesting vocabulary. For example, younger pupils explored the feelings of sand and water when describing the seaside; as a result, and with considerable help, they eventually used a good range of adjectives. However, their handwriting skills slowed them down when they tried to write their good ideas down. In all classes, the teaching of basic handwriting skills is not regular enough. Occasionally, the work given to lower- and higher-ability pupils, in mathematics is not well matched to their needs. For example, the activity working out the perimeters of fields was not challenging enough. Pupils do plenty of mathematical calculations but they are not always skilled in explaining their methods. The interesting curriculum, which includes a good range of visits, clubs and special activities, contributes much to the good outcomes for pupils. Effective ongoing assessments help pupils to learn new things quickly. Good marking by teachers gives pupils clear guidance about the next steps they need to take to improve their work, but not enough time is given to pupils to follow these helpful suggestions; this is especially so in writing. Well-tailored support, including that given by teaching assistants, means that most pupils make good progress. Several teaching assistants noted that they would like to develop their skills more. The needs of vulnerable pupils are very well met and greatly enhanced by the work of the family liaison officer and through the recently introduced nurture group. The culture of this group is shared well

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and this helps them to enjoy school and have a sense of self-worth.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school well and sets high expectations. Teamwork by all staff is strong and, as the headteacher said, 'The senior leadership team have unified to take action to raise standards.' Self-evaluation is aided by good tracking systems, so that pupils' progress is carefully monitored. Added to this, leaders check the quality of lessons and pupils' work and test results well. The thorough analysis of the performance of different groups of learners also helps leaders to make effective plans for further developments. In particular, English is improving well.

Leaders promote community cohesion well and this is demonstrated in the way that they have encouraged parents from different heritages to become more actively involved in school life and by the way in which they help pupils to understand different cultures and faiths and the diversity of their area and the wider world in which they live. Pupils from Gypsy Roma Heritages make good and sometimes outstanding progress. This is due to the support that they receive and close working partnership with their parents; this has led to improved attendance and contributes much to the way in which the school promotes good community cohesion. The school is an inclusive place to be. Discrimination is not tolerated. The school's inclusive ethos is evident in the way that they support pupils who have sometimes been unsuccessful at other schools and needed a fresh start.

Governors give good support and they know the school well. They hold the school to account over outcomes for pupils and are actively involved in planning school improvements, for example by creating more buildings for outreach work with parents. The school works hard to make links with different families and the work of the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is enhancing this well. Leaders explained that parents attend parents' evening and workshops far more than they did and they value social events, such as the summer Barbeque. Safeguarding procedures are good and these help to ensure that pupils are well cared for.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Only a few questionnaires were returned by parents. Other evidence from the school's own recent survey shows that parents are happy with the school. In the questionnaires received by inspectors their opinions were very mixed. Parents agree that their children mostly like school and they are safe. A couple noted that their children's needs were not well met and the school is not well led. The inspector found that whenever the school has been approached by parents or sees difficulties, they take action to support the child, and the school is well led. A few parents felt that there are behaviour issues. The findings of this inspection show that most pupils behave well but a few pupils find it harder to behave well and this is often because they have more complex special needs. The school works hard to include all pupils. The school's questionnaires confirm that pupils are helped to adopt healthy lifestyles and they achieve well. A few parents feel that teaching is not good, but the inspectors confirm that teaching is good overall.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Murston Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 15 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	47	6	40	0	0	2	13
The school keeps my child safe	5	33	8	53	0	0	2	13
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	40	9	60	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	40	6	40	0	0	3	20
The teaching is good at this school	6	43	5	36	1	7	2	14
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	40	6	40	2	13	1	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	40	9	60	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	47	6	40	2	13	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	40	6	40	2	13	1	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	5	33	5	33	4	27	1	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	20	9	60	0	0	2	13
The school is led and managed effectively	6	40	7	47	0	0	2	13
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	60	3	20	0	0	3	20

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Murston Junior School, Murston, Kent ME10 3QN

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school; you were all very friendly and helpful. I am writing to tell you what we found.

We can see why you enjoy coming to school. You go to a good school. You are looked after well and have many exciting things to do. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing your lovely art work and thank you to the choir for singing to me; your singing is great ' well done. Your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and this helps you to work hard and learn new things quickly. The teachers are helping you to learn the things that you need to know for secondary school and this has improved well in the last two years. Your science work is exciting and I hope that Years 5 and 6 have solved the mystery to their crime scene investigation! You are improving your reading skills well.

Well done to most of you who behave so well in school. Congratulations for doing so much for the community. I was especially impressed by the way in which you took part in the Remembrance Day Service; you were very respectful.

Your teachers and all of the adults do a great job and they want to do even better for you. We want to help them, so we have asked them to do the following important things:

- give you more time to improve and extend your writing
- make sure that you are helped to do better handwriting by practising it more so that you become faster and neater
- help you to discuss and write down each step of your thinking when you are working out how to solve mathematical problems.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector

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