

Northolmes Junior School, Horsham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125836
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340848
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Bishop
Headteacher	Sandra Ashby
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Two thirds of the time was spent looking at learning. Fifteen lessons were observed, which included observing all the teachers in the school on the days of the inspection. Meetings were held with leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, such as the strategic plan, safeguarding information, assessment data, records of school monitoring and evaluation, lesson plans and pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 86 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers as well as those returned by pupils and staff.

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

- the effectiveness of what the school is doing to improve boys' writing skills
- how successfully the school is using its assessment procedures to identify and target pupils' progress, especially those more able, in English and mathematics
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels, looking in particular at the challenge governors provide and how well community cohesion is promoted.

Information about the school

Northolmes is smaller than most primary and junior schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than is found nationally. Such needs mainly feature speech, language and communication learning difficulties, specific and/or social and emotional difficulties. Among others, the school holds Activemark and Dyslexia Friendly awards. Pupils may join a breakfast club and an after-school club which are open to the wider community. These are not managed by the governing body and were not inspected. The school has recently experienced some significant staffing and governor changes including at senior leadership level.

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

This is a good school that is ambitious to be even better. Pupils enjoy the exciting curriculum and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Almost all take part in one or more of these, which range from gardening to choir. Pupils make good progress through the school and leave having reached above average standards overall. Pupils' attainment has improved in writing as this has been a recent focus. Consequently, the gap between pupils' reading and writing skills is narrowing, especially for boys. Good teaching is focused on developing pupils' basic skills with a strong focus on making learning fun with purposeful writing opportunities, such as the Year 6 imaginary trip to the Amazon rainforest.

Most pupils behave very well and the majority have positive attitudes to learning and focus well on their work, but a small minority find this difficult. The school supports these pupils well and has good measures in place to tackle any misbehaviour. Teaching assistants are active in their support for these pupils who are mainly boys. Pupils have a good understanding about how to lead healthy lives and make healthy food choices. Many swim and are successful in a range of sports. Pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is shown in their understanding of the difference between right and wrong and how they cooperate with each other in lessons. Pupils' cultural development is the weaker area and this reflects the school's limited success in promoting stronger links in the United Kingdom and wider communities through its promotion of community cohesion.

The school is well led by the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and the staff work well as a team. Senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses and tackle these effectively through a rigorous process of self-evaluation. Planning for raising attainment is sharply focused and effective. The school's good capacity to improve further is reflected in improvements in pupils' writing, the curriculum, the good quality teaching and learning, and in the care, guidance and support given to pupils, especially those who are vulnerable. Many governors are new in role and are not sufficiently well involved in shaping the school's direction or in monitoring, evaluating and challenging how well it is doing.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the governors challenge the school effectively through regularly monitoring and evaluating the school's performance by:
 - sharing the writing of the school's self-evaluation form with the staff of the school

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- questioning and challenging judgements more rigorously
- actively seeking the evidence of the school's progress and judgements.
- Strengthen the school's promotion of community cohesion by:
 - actively promoting the pupils' engagement with a number of differing community groups in the United Kingdom and further afield.

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

Pupils were observed making good progress in lessons and achieving well. For example, in English, Years 3 and 4 pupils used drama to explore characters on the Tudor ship 'The Mary Rose'; in role they swabbed decks and fired cannons before being washed up on a desert island. This sparked their imagination resulting in some high quality writing from 'crashing waves splashing' to 'angry storm clouds forming'. Year 6 studying the Amazon rainforest had their airline tickets posted home, luggage checked in, and passports stamped, before boarding a plane to fly to the Amazon. This produced some excellent writing, research and rich learning experiences as well as being great fun! On their questionnaires almost all pupils and those spoken to said they enjoyed school. Two of the reasons given were the 'Wow' starts to lessons and teachers' good use of technology such as interactive whiteboards and computers. For instance, pupils in Year 6 skilfully created websites, used hyperlinks, and added pictures and sound tags. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates due to the support they receive. All that is needed to raise many of these outcomes to 'outstanding' is for pupils to take more initiative and develop more independent skills. Pupils have a good awareness of their local culture, but are not so well aware of the diversity of cultures today in the United Kingdom and globally.

Pupils say and inspectors confirmed that behaviour, though not perfect, is good, and that they feel safe and are confident that incidents are dealt with by adults. As class and school councillors, they have written letters to parents about unsafe parking outside school. They also consider school improvements from repairing benches in the playground to making the fence higher 'so the chickens don't escape', while eco warriors have produced 'switch off lights' posters.

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	2
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	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The redesigned curriculum is interesting and relevant to pupils. Creative links between subjects through topics and cross-curricular skills such as literacy and information and communication technology are well developed. Writing has improved and continues to be a focus. More able pupils are challenged and attend workshops with authors and poets to extend their writing, while handwriting booster classes help younger ones to improve their skills. Art, music, dance, drama and sport feature strongly and personal, social and emotional development underpins the school's work well.

The typically good teaching has been sustained across some very different ability groups in spite of some significant staff changes and instability. A good example of how teachers use questioning well to extend pupils' learning was observed in a Year 5 mathematics lesson. The teacher increasingly challenged pupils to problem-solve a five-a-side football competition and, not satisfied with just the answer, she asked, 'How do you know?' This encouraged pupils to verbalise their thinking and embed their understanding. Good systems are in place to check on pupils' progress. These are used well to identify any pupils at risk of falling behind and effective programmes are put in place to help them to catch up. Pupils are clear about their targets and use the prompts inside their books and teachers' marking to help them to improve their work. While some excellent marking was seen, other marking was not as sharply focused. The systems of care for pupils are good, particularly for those with speech, communication, social, emotional and behavioural needs. These pupils are given good support to help them work alongside their classmates. The school has striking examples of how it has supported individual pupils and their families to help them to overcome some significant

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challenges to learning. Outside agencies and partnerships are used effectively to ensure that provision promotes pupils' achievement and well-being.

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?

At the time of the inspection all safeguarding procedures were secure and met requirements. The thorough risk assessment reflects the school's commitment to be fully inclusive so that all pupils, whatever their needs, can play a full part in all aspects of school life. The school is effective in promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination and ensures all pupils are well supported in their learning. The ambitious and dedicated headteacher has created an enthusiastic team that shares her drive for improvement. Development planning is clearly focused on raising attainment, with measurable success criteria.

There are a number of new governors, including the recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body. While they are conscientious, they have yet to challenge strongly the work of the school through regularly monitoring and evaluating its performance or sharing in the writing of the school's self-evaluation procedures. The plan to promote community cohesion is based on a clear evaluation of the school's local context and identifies the need to develop pupils' good knowledge and multicultural understanding of the diversity in the United Kingdom and further afield. Attendance at parents' meetings is high; parents receive a good deal of information about events and their children's progress, and they are regularly consulted about their views.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Just under half of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The overwhelming majority are happy with the school. They also indicate that their children are happy and make good progress. Inspection evidence supports these positive views. A small minority, however, expressed two common concerns about how the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour and about the leadership and management of the school. Inspectors investigated the methods used to tackle unacceptable behaviour, checked pupils' behaviour and gathered pupils' views also. Inspectors judged the procedures to be effective and pupils' behaviour good. Inspectors found leadership and management to be effective, particularly by the headteacher, but judged that governance needs to be improved.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northolmes 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 86 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 175 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	44	43	50	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	35	41	46	53	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	36	51	59	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	31	48	56	9	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	36	53	62	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	28	55	64	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	27	56	65	4	5	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)	30	35	42	49	8	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	28	51	59	6	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	24	42	49	17	20	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	23	55	64	7	8	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	31	40	47	13	15	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	37	42	49	9	10	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



15 March 2010

Dear Pupils Inspection of Northolmes Junior School, Horsham, RH12 4ET

I am writing to thank you all for being so welcoming and friendly when we visited your school recently. We agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school. You learn well in lessons and make good progress because you are well taught, and you are now making better progress than before in your writing ? well done! I particularly enjoyed the Year 6 dance interpretation of Henri Rousseau's painting, 'Surprised!' It was super!

You told us how your learning was fun and that you enjoyed the many visits and visitors that you have. We hope that you enjoyed your day at Hever Castle. You certainly had fun at Kew gardens and on your imaginary flight to the Amazon rainforest as your topic books and photographs show. By the time you leave you are doing better than most pupils in other schools in English, mathematics and science. Although you know a lot about the different communities locally the school could do more to help you find out about people's beliefs, cultures and traditions in the United Kingdom and further afield. You can help by asking lots of questions about this too! Governors work hard to support your school but we think they could get more involved in checking that you and the school are doing as well as possible.

Your headteacher and all the staff want to make the school even better for you. These are the things we have asked them to do to help with this.

- Check that your school governors keep an eye on how well you are doing and make sure the school is doing as well as it should, and also get governors involved in writing the plans that help your school to improve.
- Help you to have a better understanding of people living in the United Kingdom and further afield by making links with other schools in this country and abroad.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning

Lead inspector

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