



Holtsmere End Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117336
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280047
Inspection dates 9 May 2006 to 10 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Martin Beale LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Shenley Road
School category	Community		HP2 7JZ
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01442 253189
Number on roll	194	Fax number	01442 213695
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Jeff Wallace
Date of previous inspection	29 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Christine Marshall

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized junior school serves the Woodhall Farm area to the north-east of Hemel Hempstead. The pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. An average proportion are from minority ethnic groups, although almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. National test results of pupils when they enter in Year 3 indicate that attainment is above average overall. However, a relatively high proportion have not reached the standard expected for their age in writing. This leads to a high proportion of pupils being identified with learning difficulties and disabilities, although the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holtsmere Junior is a good school with some outstanding features. This confirms the school's own view. Pupils build on well from their infant school experiences. They make good progress and are prepared well for secondary school and the future. Pupils learn well because teaching is good. Year 6 test results have risen since the last inspection and have improved most in mathematics. Standards are above average by Year 6 and are exceptionally high in mathematics. Pupils' writing develops well across the school, but opportunities to practise their skills in other subjects are inconsistent. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are satisfactory, but again pupils have limited opportunities in other subjects to develop these skills and apply them regularly. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make excellent progress. Teachers plan carefully to meet the specific needs of each of these pupils. Teaching assistants helping pupils with statements of special educational need, provide excellent support. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language are also catered for well and make good progress thanks to the additional support they receive. The very strong links with parents and outside agencies play an important part in promoting the pupils' well-being. Pupils thrive in the caring environment where they are supported and guided well to achieve as much as they can, both academically and personally. They are polite, courteous and keen to talk about their school. They participate in large numbers in the activities provided at lunchtime and after school. Behaviour is good. It has previously been a cause of concern, but parents and pupils report that the action taken to improve it has been beneficial. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is good. A key reason for the school's success is strong teamwork throughout the school. The school knows its strengths and where further development could lead to higher standards. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. Leadership at all levels is focused and highly effective. Governance has improved considerably since the last inspection. In response in part to recruitment difficulties, the school has become adept at training its own teachers and developing leadership capacity. It is a measure of its success that several teachers have moved rapidly on to promoted posts. Given the good improvement since the last inspection and the effectiveness of leadership, the school is well placed to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide additional opportunities for pupils to develop and practise both their writing and ICT skills more consistently in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is above average overall, although a relatively high proportion have not reached the expected standard in writing. Pupils make good progress and by Year 6 standards are above average in English and science and

exceptionally high in mathematics. Progress is more rapid in mathematics than in English or science. This is thanks to sharply focused teaching that successfully and rapidly develops skills. The school sets relatively challenging targets, which the pupils mostly meet or exceed. Some groups of pupils such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress. Teachers are very successful at enabling pupils who enter Year 3 with below average standards to reach at least the national average by Year 6. These pupils make more rapid progress than others because programmes are matched carefully to their identified individual needs. Weaknesses in pupils' writing on entry are more than compensated for by the action taken by the school. Pupils' writing is imaginative and interesting and improves rapidly as they move up the school. Unusually, Year 6 test results for writing were better than for reading in 2005. Pupils' number skills develop well, particularly their ability both to use a wide range of different methods of calculation accurately and to apply these skills to solve mathematical problems.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and their lessons. Behaviour is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are integrated fully so that they, and those who learn English as an additional language, take part in all aspects of school life. Attendance is above average. The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and the school gives emphasis to this aspect of its work. Pupils gain a good understanding of, and respect for, different cultures and customs. Moral and social issues are taught well and help the pupils to develop a sense of justice. Pupils learn to recognise and deal with risks and how to behave safely in and out of school. They understand and largely adopt a healthy approach to food and exercise. Many take part in the additional physical activities provided at lunchtime and after school. In addition, many pupils belong to sports clubs outside school. Pupils make a significant contribution to school and community life. They raise money for charities and take their responsibilities seriously, such as being school council representatives. They have an increasing voice in the school and have been instrumental in changes to lunch time play activities. This stands them in good stead for their future education and economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn successfully and progress well because teaching is good. Teachers set high expectations and plan effectively to meet the needs of pupils, including those who are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Lessons are well prepared and teachers try different ways to make lessons fun and interesting. As a result, pupils become inspired to learn in a variety of ways. Teachers use the interactive white boards productively, such as when showing film clips to stimulate writing. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills are not always exploited. Teachers

make certain pupils know the focus for learning in each lesson and use this to assess whether they have gained new knowledge. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly so they know what they have done well and what they need to develop next. Consequently pupils are challenged successfully and build consistently on their prior learning. Pupils are also encouraged to assess their own understanding and where they need to aim next. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are included very well and supported extremely well by the deployment of highly effective teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets statutory requirements and enables pupils to foster their personal well-being in interesting and productive ways. Pupils say they enjoy what the school has to offer. Visits and visitors, plus a range of clubs, enhance their learning effectively and encourage positive attitudes. Healthy lifestyles are promoted particularly well. Use of the sports hall and activities at lunchtimes and during after-school clubs illustrate the school's strong commitment to promoting pupils' physical development. Teachers make certain that literacy and numeracy lessons feature prominently in teaching programmes. Pupils are given chances to discuss and work collaboratively, such as when they debated the pros and cons of building a hotel in an area of outstanding beauty. However, there are some missed opportunities for them to practise writing in other subjects, partly because of too much use of printed worksheets. The school has invested considerably in computer hardware very recently and has rightly identified pupils' use of these resources as an area for continued curriculum improvement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a good standard of care and high quality guidance and support for pupils. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are monitored extremely closely and are secure. Teachers know the pupils really well. They are committed to providing them with any necessary support so they can achieve both academically and personally. This means that they progress well. Groups or individuals needing additional help or more challenge are identified clearly as soon as they enter the school. Relevant information to improve learning is gathered and presented on 'provision maps' for each class. These are an effective tool to ensure guidance and support are tailored to meet the learning needs of pupils. The majority of pupils are familiar with their 'I Wish' targets in literacy. The school is seeking quite rightly to develop further this kind of personalised learning target in other areas.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Highly focused leadership at all levels has provided an exceptionally clear direction to the work of all in the school. The drive for high standards underpins all that the school

does. The headteacher's strong leadership, supported well by the experienced deputy head, has forged a very effective staff team, committed to meeting the diverse needs of pupils. Governors are effective and are well led. They have the expertise and understanding to ask searching questions of the headteacher and staff. They provide valuable support and are fully involved in planning for the future. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor provision and improve the work of all staff. Teachers gain considerably from lesson observations and sharing practice. Priorities for development are clear and are based on careful evaluation. Parental views are sought and incorporated into planning where possible. Action taken to tackle identified areas for improvement is effective, as illustrated by improved writing and behaviour. Finances are well managed and are carefully targeted to meet staffing priorities, to improve facilities such as the new sports hall and to extend resources by providing new computers. The impact of spending is evaluated to ensure that the school gains good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn. There are very many aspects of your school that we liked. You and your parents are right in thinking that you go to a good school. What we liked about your school: - You are cared for and looked after well in school, and prepared well for when you go to secondary school. - You are making good progress and do particularly well in mathematics. - Your written work improves considerably as you move through the school. - You enjoy taking part in the additional activities at lunchtime and after school. - You behave well around the school. You play nicely with your friends at lunchtime and speak very politely to your teachers and visitors. - You support each other well and contribute much to improving both the school and the local community. - Your teachers and teaching assistants work very hard to make sure that you all get the right sort of help you need. - Your headteacher, staff and governors run the school very well. We are very pleased to see how all of your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. We are suggesting to them that they provide more opportunities for you to practise your writing in subjects such as history and geography and that you get to use computers more often than at present. We wish you well for the future. Yours sincerely