

Northlands Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115243
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357717
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Sutherland-Harper

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Stimpson
Headteacher	Kevin Watts
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed eighteen lessons taught by twelve teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, the school's improvement plan, assessment data, monitoring and evaluation records, policies and procedures. In addition to replies to questionnaires from pupils and staff, questionnaires from 36 parents and carers were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well are pupils doing in mathematics and writing?
- How well do assessment and marking contribute to pupils' progress?
- How effectively do teaching and learning strategies meet the needs of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the gifted and talented, and girls?
- How rigorously do leaders and managers at all levels, including governors and middle managers, monitor and evaluate the work of the school to ensure that attainment continues to rise?

Information about the school

Northlands Junior School is of average size for a junior school and serves the local area. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average and the proportion of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational needs, is above the national average. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is below average, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Staffing is now settled after a period of some turbulence. The school holds Healthy Schools and International Schools status.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in response to recent improvements in teaching and to clear and effective behaviour strategies. As a result of increased monitoring and evaluation at all levels and a careful focus on key areas such as writing and mathematics, achievement is rising. Pupils are now in line with or close to national averages in many areas. The school is improving because leaders, managers and other staff are working together to implement their shared vision of further improvement. One parent summed it up by saying, 'The change in this school is fantastic. You could say it is a completely different school.'

Teaching and progress have been improving rapidly, accompanied by an improved tracking and monitoring process. An inclusive approach in the classroom is balanced by a careful focus on supporting the needs of the individual. Teaching increasingly meets the needs of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the gifted and talented and girls. It is not yet consistently good because planning does not always include regular extension activities to challenge all pupils fully throughout the lesson. Pupils have appropriate targets and marking is regular and thorough. Assessment strategies have developed but assessment does not consistently provide enough feedback to fully show pupils how they have met their targets or the steps they have yet to take to meet them. Leaders' and managers' monitoring of the quality of teaching across the school has been effective in eliminating inadequacy. However, monitoring does not always focus on teaching's impact on pupils in order to fine tune improvements and make sure learning reaches a consistently good standard. Targets to secure further improvement in core subjects are in place but are not all sufficiently specific and measurable.

Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school. Pupils are well cared for and have confidence that the school will help them wherever possible. Careful arrangements ensure transitions into the school and on into secondary school are as seamless as possible. Developing links with parents and carers and effective liaison with other agencies ensure that there is an organised response to any problems which might arise. Safeguarding arrangements are good and pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.

The school has accurately evaluated its strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do to continue with its present rate of progress. Key areas, such as attainment, are improving as a result of the ongoing focus on teaching and planning. Responsibilities are shared effectively between an enlarged leadership team and middle managers together with close involvement of the governing body so that the pace of learning is now progressing at an increasing rate and improvements already made are secure.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so 70% of lessons are good by April 2012, by:
 - ensuring that there are extension activities throughout the lesson to appropriately challenge all groups of pupils
 - giving more detailed feedback about pupils' personal targets to show pupils how targets have been met.
- Ensure that attainment continues to improve by:
 - setting more specific and measurable school targets
 - monitoring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

All groups of pupils demonstrate satisfactory achievement and enjoyment of learning. As a result of clear and effective behaviour strategies, pupils are fully engaged in lessons and increasingly seek to do well. Pupils work closely together with adults and enjoy good relationships with each other. The school has accurately identified mathematics and writing as areas requiring further improvement and has used support provided through partnership arrangements to ensure that pupils make progress with their learning. Practical activities, such as a Year 4 lesson where pupils produced cut-out cards in the style of Victorian artists, motivate them towards further exploration of themes through writing and discussion. All pupils, including the gifted and talented, girls and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are keen to contribute in lessons. Pupils' pace of learning is at least appropriate, because support is in place to ensure that this happens. Current results confirm that attainment, which has been low, is improving in all areas.

Most children start school with levels of skill that are well below those expected for their age. Rates of progress are now increasing, most significantly in writing and reading and to a lesser but rising extent in mathematics, as a result of careful focus on improvement strategies. Girls and boys are making similar and improving progress. The school has focused successfully on raising attendance to average levels and on improving punctuality. This, together with the ongoing development of literacy and numeracy skills and increased provision of information and communication technology, enables pupils to adequately develop the skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

The very large majority of pupils say that they feel safe in school. They look out for each other and feel that their school helps them to be healthy, especially through the provision of facilities like the breakfast club and a full range of extra-curricular clubs. Behaviour, as observed around the school and in lessons by inspectors, is satisfactory. Pupils have a range of opportunities to contribute to the school, through the school council and as buddies to pupils joining the school in Year 3. Young Ambassadors welcome visitors and represent the school in discussions with them and with senior leaders to inform their views of teaching and learning. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory because they have opportunities to reflect thoughtfully on other people's lives and circumstances. Their moral development is sound because discussion is used to consider issues which might affect

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them, such as whether a playing field should be used to build houses on. Pupils' social development allows them to work together and share ideas on projects which they value such as how to reduce any bullying. Cultural development is sound but multi-cultural awareness is not fully developed. As a result, some pupils do not have a deep understanding of people's ideas and beliefs in other parts of the world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers work with teaching assistants and pupils to ensure that the classroom provides a supportive learning environment. Pupils are well managed because expectations of behaviour are clear and consistent. Electronic technology is adequately incorporated into the delivery of lessons and brings in additional visual and aural materials. Questioning is used well to encourage pupils to think more deeply about how to solve challenges and to bring in the quieter boys and girls in the class. A careful blend of questioning and challenge in a Year 6 mathematics lesson helped pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make steady progress without providing the answers for them. In a good literacy lesson, assessment was well used to set work for more-able pupils while also celebrating how all groups of pupils learned to successfully add similes and metaphors to their work. This led into the possible development of extended writing skills. Occasionally, planning does not allow for extension activities which challenge all pupils fully throughout the lesson rather than having these as an added task when other work is finished.

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The curriculum is adequately matched to the needs of pupils. The school has looked carefully at the resources used to develop reading, writing and mathematics. Recent acquisitions are adding to developments in these areas through the opportunities which they provide for further engagement. There is a sound emphasis on basic skills. Provision for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is good and they are well supported by discussion sessions and careful planning of the help they need. Cross-curricular links are developing suitably. Pupils enjoy projects such as work on the ancient Greeks and on putting gardens together where many aspects of subjects are taught at the same time. Additional curricular provision for gifted and talented and more-able pupils is improving but is not yet fully developed.

Staff at all levels know the pupils well and provide good quality care, guidance and support. Pupils are clear that they are supported in their efforts by adults who are interested in them and that there is always someone to whom they can talk or turn. The school provides a range of support systems to help anyone who is potentially vulnerable. Provision is enhanced by the calm, reflective atmosphere which increasingly pervades the school. Interventions to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well-targeted. In one intervention session where the pupil made enhanced progress through specific activities, he was already keen to know what they would be doing next time before the session had ended.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has formed an effective senior leadership team which is working cohesively to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Tracking data are increasingly used to monitor and evaluate progress so that senior leaders, the governing body and staff have a full idea of the school's effectiveness. Middle managers are fully involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning, thereby ensuring that improvement does not just depend on one or two leaders. Training has been put in place for all staff on identified areas for improvement such as assessment and planning. Sharing of best practice is at an early stage of development as a means of supplementing previous external support. Staff feel proud to be at the school, know what the school is trying to achieve and feel that their contribution is valued.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive of the school and has a secure understanding of the issues facing it. An increased understanding of data and its use as well as close involvement with the school enables governors to contribute effectively to the process of school improvement. The school is working continually to

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increase engagement with parents and carers and has developed access to the school and use of its facilities. Partnerships include close links with local services and the adjacent infant school. These partnerships often deliver services which the school could not otherwise provide and are helping to improve the rate of progress. The school adequately promotes equality of opportunity and seeks to eliminate discrimination within lessons and also by making opportunities available to all members of the community. Good safeguarding arrangements are in place and include effective use of partners such as the local fire service to reinforce messages. The school has produced a community cohesion action plan after an audit of provision. It is developing further links with the local community so that pupils have a complete understanding of their area and has established links with a school in Devon to complement pupils' own experiences to date. The school has contacts with schools in Uganda and Hong Kong; together with the teaching of Spanish, these are giving pupils a developing perspective on the world around them. The school makes satisfactory use of its resources to ensure satisfactory value for money in meeting pupil needs and securing improved outcomes.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of the small number of parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire are very pleased with their children's experience at the school. They are particularly happy about the ways in which the school keeps their children safe and informs them of their children's progress, with the quality of teaching and with the progress their children are making at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Northlands 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 247 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	44	19	53	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	75	9	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	56	16	44	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	53	17	47	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	61	14	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	53	15	42	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	44	19	53	1	3	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)	11	31	23	64	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	53	16	44	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	39	20	56	2	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	28	25	69	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	56	15	42	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	61	14	39	0	0	0	0

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



11 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northlands Junior School, Basildon, SS13 3JQ

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn in lessons. I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school.

The school provides you with a satisfactory education and is improving in many ways. Here are some of the things your school does well.

As you told us, adults in your school take good care of you.

Teaching is improving and that means you are making better progress.

Your school helps you to be fit and healthy through the variety of activities it offers.

Your behaviour has improved and so has attendance.

The headteacher and his staff want to make your school even better so we have asked them to do these things, which will help:

- to make sure that there are enough extension activities to challenge you throughout the lessons
- to let you know exactly where you are in meeting your targets
- to set clear targets for the school which can be measured
- to look closely at how well you learn in lessons to help your standards rise.

You can help your school to improve by always behaving well and by trying hard with the work that you do.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sutherland-Harper

Lead inspector

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