

# Harwood Hill Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117227
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	373146
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Brian Cartwright HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ollie Dowlen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Philip Gray
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Harwood Close Welwyn Garden City AL8 7AG
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<b>Fax number</b>	01707 331245
<b>Email address</b>	head@harwood.herts.sch.uk

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<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	8–9 June 2011
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by eight different teachers. They met with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body including a parent governor, and spoke with a local authority representative. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's evaluation and planning documents, local authority monitoring reports, and governing body minutes. They examined 67 parental questionnaires, 97 pupil questionnaires and 10 staff questionnaires.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average sized primary school. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those whose first language is not English, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with a statement of special educational needs are average. The school has met government floor targets in the past three years. There is an on-site private pre-school provision that is not managed by the governing body. A new headteacher took up post in September 2010. In addition, six teaching staff have joined the school since its previous inspection. All but two members of the governing body are new since September 2010.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety</b>	<b>2</b>
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

## Key findings

'The way they teach makes the children really want to learn.' This comment by a parent accurately captures the key strength of Harwood Hill School. It is providing good quality education for all of its pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are rightly proud of their school. They persevere when work is challenging, cooperate well together in lessons and behave well around the school. They also contribute their ideas enthusiastically in group and class discussions. This is because teachers plan and deliver interesting activities that engage and motivate pupils of all abilities well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe, because staff care for their needs and concerns well. The achievement of pupils at Key Stage 1 is good, leading to above average attainment by the end of Year 2. The new headteacher quickly identified the reasons behind declining Key Stage 2 English attainment in 2010. All staff have worked hard together to improve standards of literacy through the 'Big Write' approach, so that achievement in Key Stage 2 has recovered and is currently good. Other school managers play an effective role in monitoring pupils' progress, through regularly scrutinising their work and collaborating with colleagues to improve practice.

Most lessons are good, because teachers successfully motivate the pupils with their own enthusiasm, good subject knowledge, encouragement and high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. In the few lessons where teaching is satisfactory, teachers spend too long talking to the whole class, without effectively using strategies that require every pupil to respond. Pupils' work is thoroughly and accurately marked throughout the school, but sometimes the comments do not make it clear enough to pupils what they should do to improve, and when they should do it.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Minimise the time spent by teachers, to no more than 5 minutes, when they are introducing the lesson to the whole class, so that pupils can all begin their learning activities promptly.
- Make sure written advice to pupils on what needs improving in their work is clear, requires a direct response, and also ensure pupils subsequently have time to act upon that advice.

## Main report

Since the previous inspection in 2007, there have been substantial changes to staff, and to the composition of the governing body. Although pupils' performance initially remained high in 2008, a decline in 2009 and 2010 Year 6 test results occurred, and Key Stage 2 overall progress measures slipped from significantly above average, to just below average because attainment in English dropped from significantly above to just below average. Attainment in mathematics remained above average. The new headteacher quickly identified weaknesses in Key Stage 2 English as the cause, and has successfully galvanised the current teachers in a robust programme to tackle these shortfalls, particularly in writing. As a result of his strongly supportive leadership, all staff have worked hard to improve provision for literacy, so that overall achievement in Key Stage 2 has recovered and is currently good because progress is better than expected for most pupils individually, and groups of pupils. Their attainment in English, including in reading, and in mathematics, is above average when measured by the required formal Teacher Assessment. Despite the historic decline for older pupils, the achievement of pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 remained good, with attainment at the end of the stage continuing to be above average, including good reading skills. Pupils arrive in Nursery with generally lower than national expectations for their age. Good provision, including good teaching, ensures these younger children make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, before starting Year 1 at broadly average levels of attainment. Their independence, patience and determination to learn is already emerging in their positive attitudes to learning at this early stage.

The governing body was not closely or regularly monitoring performance, partly because that information was not available. The reconstituted governing body has recently received good support from the local authority including training in child protection, safer recruiting and the use of school performance data. The new senior leadership team has introduced rigorous termly assessment checks for every pupil. Subject coordinators now play a critically effective role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the school. In turn, classroom teachers in Key Stage 2 now know what progress pupils ought to be making from Key Stage 1, and can see who needs extra support. This swift and effective response at all levels is evidence of good current leadership, a shared ambition for further improvement in outcomes for each pupil and demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. Teachers report favourably on the approach to professional development introduced by the

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headteacher, that includes good training, coaching, clear job descriptions and specific time to carry out responsibilities.

No significant differences in progress between different groups of pupils were evident in 2010, with groups of pupils attaining standards overall that were similar to, or better, than similar groups nationally. Now, as then, pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties make just as good progress as others. This is also the case for pupils whose first language is not English, which is consistent with the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity. That inclusive approach is personified by the headteacher and shared by his staff. The school receives several new pupils each year part way through their key stage, who all do well within a relatively short period of time and stay to the end of the key stage. This is because teachers work very well with support staff, and all the classroom teams are skilled at supporting and including these otherwise potentially vulnerable learners. Their day-to-day caring and encouraging manner results in all pupils becoming fully included in school life, and enjoying equal success. A noticeable strength of classroom practice is the active role played by teaching assistants in leading learning, to pupils of all abilities, and the equally effective role of the teacher in taking time to work with groups of pupils of all abilities. Fresh displays of pupils' work throughout the school show good evidence of pupils studying a range of different cultures, faiths and backgrounds.

Teaching is good overall, exemplified in the best lessons where teachers successfully motivate their pupils with their own enthusiasm, good subject knowledge, encouragement and high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. In these good lessons, very little time is lost in setting up the lesson's activities, so pupils can get cracking on the main activities quickly. Those activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and interests, and include a strong demand for pupils to think for themselves, reflect upon the meaning of what they are learning, talk with partners, try practical activities as well as just written tasks, and find out information for themselves. This results in a very positive, good humoured and enjoyable classroom working ethos. It also cultivates the natural inquisitiveness of pupils, who are keen to ask questions and seek explanations when they are unsure. As a result, pupils are confident learners, cooperate effectively together and with staff, and learn briskly. In a small minority of lessons, teachers spend too long talking to the whole class as they set up the main activities without engaging every pupil. As a result, some pupils have to wait to get started on learning, although they remain politely attentive in the meantime. Reading is taught well throughout the school, resulting in confident readers of all ages. The announcement by a Year 2 teacher that a phonics lesson was about to start was greeted with an enthusiastic and resounding 'YEAH!' In the few lessons where teaching is satisfactory, teachers spend too long talking to the whole class, without using strategies that require every pupil to respond. Pupils' work is thoroughly marked, with good work highlighted and praised. Errors are accurately identified, but sometimes the written comments are too subtle to trigger a response; for example, 'Do you think you should check your calculations?' really means, 'These need checking, then doing again!'

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Pupils enjoy school a great deal and are proud of their community. For example, they tried very hard to walk quietly and respectfully into a Key Stage 2 assembly, knowing they were representing the school. They carefully considered and reflected upon the message, linked to taking small steps towards big goals. Because of the good quality of teaching, pupils are well motivated and try very hard to do well, persevering when the tasks are difficult. Their commitment to learning is a distinctive personal quality that is a strength of the school. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school; recent improvements to the organisation of playtimes are much appreciated by pupils and result in lively, but considerate, behaviour in the playground. Because of the close attention to their care paid by staff, pupils are confident that rare instances of bullying will be resolved. Almost all the pupils in the survey feel safe all of the time, and all 78 parents who responded said the school kept their child safe. There are hardly any serious disciplinary incidents, or instances of lessons being disrupted. One class could recall, after a bit of thought, 'losing one minute of breaktime', once. The school is a harmonious community where pupils are happy, indicative of the high moral and social standards engendered by the school in its pupils; one pupil said, 'I wish I could live here.' Parents are almost unanimously supportive of all the work of the school and agree that behaviour is good, their child enjoys school, and the school keeps them safe. School leaders are aware of one or two instances where some individual parental concerns have yet to be resolved. But one comment, typical of many, perceptively noted the school has 'just the right teachers to make my child grow and flourish both academically and personally'. The parents association (HHSA) is making an important contribution financially and socially to school life, ensuring the school is held in high esteem by its local community. Other partnerships are strong, including those with local authority agencies in support of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Attendance and punctuality are broadly average and improving. The headteacher identified inconsistencies in the previous practice of the school in recording 'lates', and a number of parents and carers taking their children out of school for term time holidays. He is rightly working hard to remind those families of the negative impact this may have on their children's progress, and the need to ensure children are brought to school in good time. As a result, attendance and punctuality have improved since last year. Teachers are very good at welcoming the odd latecomer, carefully ensuring the pupil is not directly associated with the punctuality problem.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harwood Hill Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	54	75	18	25	0	0	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	51	71	21	29	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	44	60	26	36	3	4	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	40	55	30	41	3	4	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	44	60	27	37	1	1	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	45	62	25	34	3	4	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	43	59	27	37	3	4	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	34	47	29	40	8	11	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	29	40	34	47	1	1	1	1
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	42	58	29	40	2	3	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	39	53	28	38	6	8	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	44	60	25	34	2	3	2	3

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](http://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"> <li>■ The achievement of all pupils.</li> <li>■ Behaviour and safety.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of leadership and management.</li> </ul> <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</li> </ul>
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.**



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Harwood Hill Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School,  
Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7AG**

Thank you for your friendly and positive welcome to me and Ms Bax, during our inspection of your school. You are rightly enjoying your learning at this good school. We spent time in all of your classes, and found good teaching, and particularly good learning because you are so committed to doing your best. Once you have the chance to get started on lesson activities, your perseverance and enthusiasm help you to make good progress. We also appreciated how well you behave towards one another, both in lessons and around the school. You show excellent consideration for one another, and everyone seems to be included in your games.

Some test results in English for Year 6 pupils last year were not as good as possible. The headteacher has spotted the problem, which was linked to writing. That is why he has introduced 'the Big Write', which we know you enjoy. This is helping to ensure you are currently achieving well. Most lessons get started briskly, so you are soon into the main activity, and of course soon learning new things. All lessons should be like this. Teachers spend many hours accurately marking your work, and are good at giving you praise and encouragement. They also spot what needs improving, but are sometimes a bit too polite in telling you exactly what to do to fix it, and insisting that you do so promptly. You can help by looking back at their marking, responding to the advice, and showing them when you have done it.

Best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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