

Pixmore Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117259
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379380
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marian Adams
Headteacher	Alex Evans
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2009
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed involving eight teachers. The work of teaching assistants supporting the breakfast and 'brunch' clubs and small groups of pupils and individuals was also observed. Inspectors held meetings with staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school self-evaluation documents, data on pupils' progress, external monitoring reports and development planning. A wide range of documents relating to safeguarding procedures was scrutinised. Responses to the inspection questionnaire from 40 parents or carers were analysed as well as those from pupils and staff.

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

- Are girls and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals making enough progress in mathematics?
- How well do teachers manage pupils' behaviour to ensure their learning is not disrupted?
- Have pupils' rates of progress improved since the last inspection?

Information about the school

This is an average size primary school serving the local area. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils of black or minority ethnic heritage is broadly similar to that found nationally although few pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also higher than average as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. There is a small number of pupils in the care of the local authority.

Since the last inspection, due to the closure of two nearby schools, the school's intake of pupils has changed. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs has increased, with a significant proportion of these pupils identified as having autistic spectrum disorders and/or complex behavioural difficulties. There has been a change in more than half the teaching staff as well as deployment of temporary staff to cover for three teachers on maternity leave.

The school has attained the Activemark for provision in physical education, Artsmark Bronze award and the Eco-Schools Bronze award. The school gained the Investors in People award in September 2010. It provides a breakfast club for small groups of pupils in Years 3 and 4.

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

This school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It demonstrates considerable strengths in its provision for pupils' personal development. Pupils' attainment is broadly average and they make satisfactory progress. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress. Pupils whose circumstances may make them particularly vulnerable make good progress in their personal development. Pupils say they enjoy school, like their teachers and the range of school clubs and opportunities to join the 'brunch club'. Behaviour is good; it improves as pupils move through the school. Older pupils have well-developed social skills and good manners.

Teaching is never less than satisfactory. Teachers' expertise in precise assessment is developing well. However, they are not routinely using this information to plan work to challenge pupils. The effectiveness of use of time and teaching assistants is inconsistent across the school.

Good systems identify groups or individuals whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. These pupils receive good, sensitive support and encouragement to ensure good self-esteem so that they confidently take part in all school activities. Pupils are known very well so any unhappiness or uncharacteristic behaviour is noted quickly and something done about it. Pupils are confident that they are safe at school and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. Links with parents and carers are good. For example, parents and carers play an important role in supporting homework and hearing their children read at home.

The capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. The changing profile of the school's intake of pupils and increasingly diverse range of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities is being dealt with well. However, with considerable changes in staff, there are new middle managers. These staff have yet to receive training and time and opportunity to fulfil their monitoring roles. Consequently they do not have information to identify improvements and thus have a measurable impact on increasing pupils' rate of progress.

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.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and the use of assessment to a consistently good level in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment further by:
 - ensuring lessons start on time and that teaching is at a brisk pace
 - providing a good balance of time between teachers' input and time for pupils to work
 - setting realistic and challenging targets for pupils to attain and sharing these with pupils
 - implementing a programme of rigorous and regular monitoring of teaching quality by the headteacher and subject leaders
 - using the outcomes of the monitoring to focus support, training and challenge for individual teachers.

- Develop the roles of new middle-managers by:
 - providing them with training and time to enable them to fulfil their monitoring roles rigorously and regularly
 - using information gained from their monitoring or data analysis to pinpoint and plan exactly what needs to be done to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' attainment is average in national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. School data indicates that progress of boys and girls is now similarly satisfactory as they move from Year 3 to Year 6. School data, lesson observations and pupils' books indicate that progress in mathematics is satisfactory. The introduction of 'turbo-tables' has had a good impact on pupils' keenness to learn and use multiplication and division facts. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a whole. Strong, knowledgeable support has made a particular difference to some individuals whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, resulting in more confident learning and them being able to manage their own behaviour.

Pupils enjoy learning, especially when the pace is lively and the tasks challenging. For example, in an outstanding English lesson for Year 4, pupils cooperated extremely well to write poems, songs or raps to describe the school's recent Christmas Fair. Proficient teaching assistants were deployed very effectively to question, prompt and encourage pupils so that all pupils worked at a very good rate and were pleased with their efforts.

The school has worked very successfully to train knowledgeable teams of adults to mentor small groups or individual pupils to help them learn strategies for managing their behaviour. Consequently, it is most uncommon that lessons are disrupted. Pupils' personal development is good. They say they like school and demonstrate this

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with their above average attendance. They show a good level of respect for one another’s achievements during assemblies. The great majority of pupils have a strong moral code and adhere to the ‘Pixmore Way’ of conducting themselves. Pupils have a good understanding of local culture through visits and visitors. However, the school is not yet exploiting opportunities for pupils to learn about cultures other than their own. Older pupils take pride in being members of the school council or a house captain. They know their opinions are valued and believe that they make a difference to the school. Pupils also learn play leader skills so that they can help younger pupils. They have a satisfactory understanding of their personal targets and what they have to do to improve further. For their ages, pupils have a good understanding of safety with medicines, safety issues when using computers and always making sure friends or family know where they are. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and how to keep themselves fit.

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	3
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	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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

All lessons observed were satisfactory or good in terms of teaching and learning. Good teaching is shown in lessons where the pace is brisk, pupils do not sit for too long listening to their teachers, know exactly what they have to do and how much time they have to do it in. However, pupils’ work in their books demonstrates that progress is satisfactory rather than good and this is associated with inconsistency in the quality of teaching, and staff turnover across the school. Teachers in Year 3 have established good relationships with their pupils, but they are not always exploiting these to set consistent and high expectations for their pupils to settle

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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quickly to their tasks and work hard. Consequently, there are occasions when time is wasted and pupils do not achieve as well as they should. All pupils have targets for improvement in their writing and mathematics books and their work is always marked. A good feature noted in most classes is teachers’ comments to help pupils know what they have to do to improve and making sure they have time to read and respond to these. Older pupils in particular, give careful consideration to these comments and take pride in improving their work.

There have been good improvements in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) within the curriculum since the last inspection. However, the high turnover of subject leaders has disrupted the progress in developing cross-curricular links. There is some use made of these to make learning more relevant although staff recognise that there is room for further development. The take-up rate for the good range of school clubs is high and has a good impact on pupils’ enthusiasm for sporting activities. The school has worked successfully to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the changing intake, with good systems in place to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There is a wide range of support for small groups or individuals to address particular needs, for example developing spelling strategies or improving reading. The care, guidance and support of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is particularly good, enabling them to settle successfully to learning and maintaining a watchful eye on their progress and behaviour. The breakfast club provides pupils with a calm and purposeful start to their day.

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, deputy headteacher, and governing body retain their ‘common understanding of the improvements required and a united approach to implementing necessary changes’, as noted at the last inspection. They are dealing with the changing intake effectively especially in ensuring that pupils with behavioural difficulties do not hinder the learning of themselves or others. They have correctly identified and prioritised improvements and implemented appropriate strategies to ensure that most pupils make satisfactory progress. Unpredictable staffing changes, including discontinuity of middle leadership, have slowed the impact of strategies to improve the quality of teaching. Though weaknesses are identified accurately, not all leaders and managers have had opportunities to develop skills to monitor and to

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drive improvements through at a good pace. Thus, the capacity for sustained improvement has been constrained, although it remains satisfactory.

Good links with parents and carers ensure they are consulted regularly and have good opportunities to find out how well their children are learning and how they can help with this. Safeguarding procedures are good, known by all and regularly updated. Good links with the feeder infant school ensure a smooth change of schools, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Links with specialist services such as speech and language, and educational psychologists provide valuable training for staff. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy working with others in their own and local communities and have appropriate opportunities to find out about the lives of others in different parts of the United Kingdom and overseas. The equality of opportunity for pupils to achieve well in both academic and personal matters is satisfactory. There is no tolerance of any form of discrimination.

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	2
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 return rate of the questionnaire was lower than average. All parents and carers agree that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. All agree that the school is led and managed effectively. The main area where parents and carers disagree is whether the school helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspection findings are that, for their ages, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and what constitutes a healthy diet. The school provides many clubs to promote physical activities and one particular club for pupils who find it difficult to manage their weight and fitness levels.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pixmore 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 233 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	63	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	70	12	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	19	48	20	50	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	50	17	43	3	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	60	14	35	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	18	45	20	50	2	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	40	20	50	4	10	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)	19	48	20	50	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	20	50	18	45	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	53	16	40	3	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	38	22	55	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	50	20	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	29	73	10	25	1	3	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pixmore Junior School, Letchworth, SG6 1RS

Thank you all for welcoming us to your school and for sharing your thoughts and ideas about it. This helped us to make the judgements about your school, which is providing you with a satisfactory education. These are the things that were the best:

- You enjoy school and feel happy and safe.
- Your behaviour is good and you work and play together well.
- You are well looked after, especially those of you who have particular needs.
- You make a good contribution to your school and local community.

There are some key areas where the school can improve. I have asked your headteacher, senior leaders and governors to:

- make sure that teaching is always at least good, and that your teachers always plan work to make you think hard so you make even better progress from your start in school to Year 6
- make sure that all the senior teachers in the school have a good idea of how well you are doing so that they can plan further improvements.

You already make a good contribution to the life of the school. You are positive about learning and we were impressed with your good manners and how welcoming you are to visitors. You can help the school improve by continuing to behave well and work hard.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson
Lead inspector

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