

Holtsmere End Junior School

Shenley Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7JZ

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well to reach standards that are significantly above average in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding in several classes.
- Teachers know their pupils well and use this information effectively to ensure that pupils are challenged and that their individual needs are met.
- Marking of high quality celebrates pupils' achievements and means that all pupils know what they need to do next to improve.
- Effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensures they make good progress. Those who speak English as an additional language respond well to good support in class.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy being at school and are enthusiastic about their learning, work well together in class and proud of what they complete for homework.
- Bullying rarely happens and parents agree that the school keeps pupils safe.
- The senior leadership team has successfully tackled the weaknesses from the previous inspection.
- Teaching and learning is monitored regularly by senior leaders. The information gathered is used effectively to set targets for teachers and improve the quality of learning for all pupils further.
- School leaders and managers, including the governing body, know what needs to be done next to sustain the high standards achieved and further improve how well all pupils learn.
- Information about how well pupils are doing as a result of the teaching they experience is used effectively to support the robust performance management of teachers.
- Well-planned links between subjects provides good opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills; French is taught to all pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is promoted well. Pupils reflect carefully on a range of issues and show good levels of care and respect towards others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not check on pupils' learning enough in lessons to ensure all pupils make good progress.
- School leaders are yet to fully implement an improvement plan for the school's long-term future.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons and several parts of lessons.
- They spoke to pupils from the school council about their views of the school. They also held discussions with the governors, the acting headteacher and acting assistant headteachers and teachers with responsibility for aspects of the school’s work in English and mathematics.
- The inspectors also met a representative of the local authority, listened to pupils in Year 3 read, reviewed pupils’ work and looked at displays around the school.
- The inspectors reviewed the assessment information for all pupils, school improvement documents, self-evaluation documents, governing body minutes and documents related to safeguarding and the performance management of school staff.
- The inspection also took account of 20 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 23 questionnaires completed by staff and discussions with parents before school and in a pre-arranged meeting during the inspection.

Inspection team

Philip Mann, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Spencer Cartwright

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and those from service families) is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils who are believed to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the nationally set floor standards in English and mathematics, which are the minimum expectation set for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The acting headteacher will be the permanent headteacher from the start of the summer term. Four new teachers have joined the school since the time of the previous inspection.
- There is privately run childcare on the site, which is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that much is outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - set work that is exactly at the right level for all pupils
 - run lessons at a brisk pace, that they regularly check on pupils' progress and adapt teaching to ensure that pupils make rapid progress.
- Fully implement an improvement plan for the school's long-term future that clearly identifies targets against pupil achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from above-average starting points to reach standards that are well-above average in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2. This represents a significant improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Analysis of progress information confirms that this trend of improvement is being sustained, with over a half of pupils in Year 6 predicted to attain the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics in the Key Stage 2 national tests.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress due to effective support in class and small group work outside the classrooms.
- Those pupils eligible for the pupil premium make equally good and often outstanding progress because of specifically targeted support to narrow gaps in achievement. In 2012 pupils eligible for free school meals were almost two terms behind the others in English and mathematics. This additional provision effectively supports both their personal well-being and academic skills.
- Both boys and girls make equally good progress overall because teachers make sure that activities and resources used in lessons focus on their different needs. For instance, boys in Year 6 respond very well to English lessons where they have the opportunity to analyse the instructions needed to make a flying machine. In Year 4, girls respond equally well to lessons that encourage them to write a diary entry by a World War 2 evacuee describing their fears and concerns about being away from home.
- Reading skills are developed well across the school. Parents and carers contribute to their children's success by listening to reading at home and writing comments in reading diaries. Regular opportunities for reading in class and listening to stories by famous authors of children's books, consolidate a love of books and achievement in literacy further.
- Learning in lessons is mostly good and often outstanding. Pupils of different ages work very well together in mixed-age class lessons in the afternoons when they participate in lessons with a theme such as the Ancient Greeks or Tudors. Good opportunities for discussion and debate in Year 5 and 6 provide good opportunities for the development of the pupils speaking and listening skills. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is a growing strength.

The quality of teaching is good

- Much of the teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. This is a significant improvement on the previous inspection. No inadequate teaching was observed. All teachers create a positive climate for good achievement in their classrooms where vibrant displays and warm relationships promote good learning.
- Many parents and carers are very positive about the improvements made to teaching since the previous inspection. They say that their children are more enthusiastic about coming to school because learning is more focused and lessons have a 'buzz' about them. Many appreciate the new style of homework because it encourages them to work with their children over a period of time linked to a specific project.

- Lesson plans consistently identify what is to be learnt and what is expected of pupils for them to do in their learning and what is expected of them in order to demonstrate success. Most teachers use this information well to assess the progress of pupils and plan the next steps in their learning. However, in the very small number of lessons that require improvement, tasks given to pupils are not always effectively matched to the needs of the pupils and are either too difficult or not challenging enough.
- In the several lessons graded outstanding, teaching is brisk and activities fully stimulate the pupils' interest through well-organised practical problem-solving activities. For example, in a lesson for Year 3 pupils, pupils worked in small groups with great enthusiasm to collate a range of interesting adjectives to describe a god from ancient Greek mythology. In this lesson the teacher posed questions that deepened the pupils' thinking further to extend their use of adjectives in their writing.
- Most lessons move along at a brisk pace. Teachers regularly monitor the progress pupils are making and quickly give guidance and support to ensure mistakes are not made. However, sometimes teachers do not check pupils are on task quickly enough and consequently the rate of progress made slows down.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in the teaching of English and mathematics. ICT and other forms of technology are used competently to support teaching and involve pupils in exciting learning experiences such as recording themselves giving a presentation in a religious education lesson.
- Teachers use a wide range of approaches to manage behaviour well in lessons so that pupils achieve well. Subtle and discrete methods are used by teachers to make sure all pupils listen carefully to instructions and remain on task.
- Resources such as interactive whiteboards, flipcharts, digital visualisers and tablet computers are used very effectively to support teaching and include pupils in the learning experiences. Information boards about what is being learnt provide a reference point for pupils to check spellings and the promotion of independence.
- Good use is made of teaching assistants to support effectively those pupils with a specific learning need in class or small teaching groups in other teaching areas. Effective use is made of dual-language worksheets to provide appropriate activities for pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English.
- The quality of marking in all classes is good. Pupils' work in English and mathematics is marked in considerable detail to provide personalised comments and extra tasks for pupils to work at. Pupils say that they are achieving more rapidly because they know what they need to do next to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in class, in the playground areas and around the school. Relationships are positive between pupils and adults and pupils themselves. Pupils are keen to be in school and attendance is above average.

- Pupils respond well to the many opportunities planned for them to solve problems with other pupils or discuss their ideas either with a partner or in small groups. For instance, Year 6 pupils worked productively in small teams to identify the stages required to write a set of instructions to make a soup recipe as part of their work in English.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and this is a view held by many parents. There is very little bullying in school and when it does occur, pupils say that it is dealt with quickly by senior staff. Pupils value the opportunity to post any concerns to their teacher in their class 'worry box'. Discussions with pupils in the school council confirm that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet at home.
- Pupils persevere with their tasks and display positive attitudes about their learning. This is especially so in many lessons because the work is challenging and they are given opportunities to push themselves further through the choice of harder tasks.
- Pupils display a sense of what is right and wrong. They respond well to the school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They take a pride in helping others less fortunate than themselves, such as raising money for national charity events for children in other parts of the world.

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher sets high expectations of staff and pupils alike. With the support of two hardworking acting assistant headteachers she has instilled a sense of teamwork amongst the staff and governing body where all share a common vision of school improvement. Much has been achieved since the previous inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.
- The issues from the last inspection focusing around the improvement of teaching and leadership have been addressed successfully with the result that teaching has improved and pupil standards have risen significantly. This is a view shared by many parents who spoke to inspectors. One parent said that, 'Leadership has been transformational and the climate for learning has changed.' Others say that communication is much improved and that any suggestions and complaints are followed through quickly.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is managed well. The introduction of the afternoon 'nurture group' provides good support and counselling to vulnerable pupils and those who need help in working with others more easily.
- The school is successful at providing equality of opportunity for all pupils. Discrimination in any form is tackled swiftly and effectively. Accurate information related to pupil progress is checked regularly with teachers to ensure all pupils have the chance to succeed.
- A growing number of visits to places of interest and whole school events promote the pupils' spiritual, moral and social understanding well. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to consider important values such as respect and resilience. The teaching of French to all pupils provides an insight into the culture of other people in Europe.
- The management of staff performance is robust. The frequent observation of lessons is used effectively to identify teachers' strengths and set targets for further improvement. As a result, teaching is mostly good across the school with outstanding practice becoming a more common feature than in the past. Senior staff provide those teachers who are newly qualified or in need of extra support good guidance to enable them to develop their skills and expertise further.

- Leaders have an accurate view of how well the school is doing because they regularly check all aspects of the school's work. This is enhanced by reviews of subjects completed by those with specific subject responsibilities. The findings are used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences for all pupils and increase rates of achievement.
- The local authority has maintained effective oversight of the school's progress against the issues for improvement identified at the last inspection. Priorities for improvement within the local authority's statement of action have formed the basis of school improvement. A draft plan for the school's future is being developed by school leadership. This plan is yet to be widely shared within the school community to drive forward further improvement. School leaders and governors understand that any future improvement planning needs to include specific targets set against pupil achievement to measure even greater levels of school effectiveness.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is led well. Governors fully understand the strengths and needs of the school because they regularly undertake visits with a specific focus and hold meetings with staff about their responsibilities. These visits are carefully recorded and used well to inform other governors, support self-evaluation activity and discussions with school leaders. They know how targets are being set to improve teaching and what the school is doing to reward good teaching and tackle any underperformance. The governing body understands performance information and how the school is doing compared with other schools. Furthermore it makes efficient use of its limited resources so that all pupils have the best chance to succeed. Governors make sure that additional funding through the pupil premium is used well and is successful in reducing any gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils. There are secure safeguarding procedures in place.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117336
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	408850

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	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bracken
Headteacher	Emma McGuigan
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2012
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