

Arnett Hills Junior Mixed and Infant School

Berry Lane, Rickmanworth, Hertfordshire WD3 4BT

Inspection dates	24–25 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has ensured that there have been good improvements in the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- The headteacher is supported very well by the knowledgeable governing body and by subject leaders.
- Pupils' attainment is above average by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils make at least good progress from their different starting points. Children get off to a good start in the early years provision. They flourish socially and academically. Outdoor learning is especially strong.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers plan engaging work. This helps pupils develop a love of learning.
- The school is particularly successful at supporting pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils are kept very safe. They develop very high levels of confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils are proud of their work and their school. They are polite and courteous and behave well in lessons. They have high aspirations for life after Arnett Hills.
- Work in and out of lessons helps pupils to learn the importance of tolerance and respect for others.
- The school has an excellent partnership with parents. They are almost unanimously happy with the school. They support it well by fundraising or helping their children with homework.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Topics in geography and history are sometimes studied in too little detail. Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils so that they develop skills and knowledge in these subjects quickly.
- Teachers do not always respond rapidly enough to help pupils if they have finished work or have already grasped a concept.
- Leaders' development planning does not have sharp enough targets to help with measuring the impact of school improvement activities.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of pupils' work in geography and history by:
 - ensuring that topics are studied in sufficient detail to enable pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding more quickly
 - ensuring that teachers always demand enough of pupils in these subjects.
- Ensure that teachers always respond quickly to move learning on when pupils have finished their work or have successfully grasped a concept and are ready for the next step.
- Improve the quality of leaders' development planning by setting measurable targets so that the impact of initiatives can be more easily checked.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Strong leadership from the headteacher and the deputy headteacher has been instrumental in securing good improvement since the previous inspection. School leaders acted decisively to tackle weaknesses highlighted at that time, working closely with the local authority to secure the required improvements in the quality of writing across the school.
- Working together, leaders have established a culture of ambition and high expectations that are shared by all staff, pupils and parents. This is resulting in good and improved outcomes for pupils.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the school because they check all aspects carefully. They are identifying the right priorities in development planning, although these plans do not always set clear and measurable targets. This makes it difficult to measure the success of initiatives so that leaders can be clear about what is working well and what has not been effective.
- Leaders monitor teaching thoroughly. They set teachers clear targets for improvement where needed. All staff benefit from training that is closely matched to their needs, identified by rigorous performance management arrangements.
- The effectiveness of middle leadership has been greatly strengthened since the previous inspection. Subject leaders clearly understand their roles. They observe lessons to check that pupils make good progress, and use information gleaned from this and other activities to identify where provision can be improved further. This has been especially rigorous in English and mathematics.
- The curriculum (the topics and subjects taught) enables pupils to make good progress in English and mathematics. Teachers plan an exciting number of clubs and visits. These enrich learning and bring subjects alive. For example, pupils produced good-quality writing in Year 3 following a day when they 'lived' as Stone-Age dwellers. Creativity is promoted well through art and music but history and geography are not studied in sufficient detail in all classes.
- The school strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values. For example, the school council members talked about how they were elected to their positions. They show a mature understanding for their age of the importance of rules and why they are sometimes broken. This understanding, together with the culture of respect and tolerance that underpins all the school's work, prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders effectively use physical education and sports funding to widen the range of activities on offer and improve pupils' participation in sport. Funding has helped teachers to improve their skills through specialised training in areas such as dance. Participation in activities such as National Sports Week has allowed pupils to take part in new sports.
- The school uses its additional funding very well to ensure that the very small number of disadvantaged pupils do as well as other pupils academically. Their progress is monitored closely and the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others has closed by the time pupils leave the school.
- Good leadership ensures that pupils with special educational needs or disability make good progress. Regular reviews of progress ensure that programmes are matched well to pupils' needs.
- The school engages extremely well with parents. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View are pleased with the education provided by the school. They especially like the caring and nurturing atmosphere in school, typically making comments such as, 'the school is a great place where everyone feels loved' and, 'the children always seem engaged in class and deeply care about their school and each other'.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has played a good part in securing school improvement since the previous inspection. Governors utilise the skills they use in their everyday lives to ensure that all aspects of school life are checked systematically. This means that governors know the school well and are able to act decisively to address any areas of concern.
 - Governors successfully hold leaders to account for pupils' performance. They know how well the school is performing in comparison with others. They are clear about the strategies that have improved pupils' writing and have checked them carefully to ensure that the improvements are being sustained.

- Governors monitor spending closely. They ensure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used to good effect.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors and school staff are extremely diligent in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. There is regular training for staff and governors, including when new teachers join the school. Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported and that external agencies are doing all they can to provide timely support to pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching ensures that pupils learn well across the school, especially in English and mathematics. Teachers make good use of assessment information on what pupils already know when they plan learning. This ensures that work challenges the most-able pupils and supports pupils with special educational needs or disability to make good progress.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning because relationships with their teachers are exceptionally strong. Teachers take great care to help pupils understand the purpose of their work and the importance of doing well. The sensitive way that they tackle mistakes ensures that pupils can work without fear of failure. As one pupil commented, 'The teachers give us lots of help when we need it'.
- Teachers plan carefully so that activities are engaging. This helps pupils to develop excellent attitudes towards their learning. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well. Consequently, there is a purposeful atmosphere as pupils work and strive to do their best.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in English and mathematics. This means that they can introduce new skills confidently. Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are taught well, with work made fun by, for example, using song and rhymes to reinforce learning.
- Teachers give pupils good-quality feedback on their work. Pupils are especially appreciative that they are given time to respond to teachers' marking. Consequently, pupils are clear about what they have done well and what they need to improve.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils, especially when working with pupils with special educational needs or disability. They are well informed, helping pupils sensitively to improve their skills and knowledge.
- Nearly all parents feel that teaching is at least good. Teachers make good use of homework, especially for older pupils, to extend learning. Year 6 pupils are very clear that this is helping them get ready for secondary school.
- Teaching is not outstanding because teachers do not always respond quickly enough when pupils have finished their work or have mastered a concept and are ready for the next steps in their learning. While teachers' expectations are generally good, especially in English and mathematics, teachers do not always demand enough of pupils in history and geography.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are great ambassadors for the school. They are friendly, sociable and articulate. They develop high levels of confidence and a thirst for knowledge which will serve them well in later life. Their exemplary attitudes towards learning are a key factor in the school's success as teachers rarely need to prompt pupils to work harder.
- Pupils love coming to school. They demonstrate this in the very positive comments that they make about all aspects of school life: 'school is always fun' and 'every day is exciting' are typical of the views of pupils.
- Parents feel that their children are kept very safe. The pupils agree. They have a very clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, especially with regard to e-safety and how to avoid dangers when using the internet. This was supported well by a recent Safer Internet Day.
- Pupils say that they have been taught about road safety and e-safety. They are very confident about what they should do if someone calls them names or is unkind to them, although they say this rarely happens.

- Pupils are very caring towards each other. They say that bullying or even 'falling out' is very rare. They firmly believe that if bullying does occur, it will be dealt with by the adults in school.
- Pupils keenly take responsibility by being school councillors or play leaders. They appreciate that their views are valued and that they are able to contribute thoughtfully to school improvement.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave extremely well in lessons. They are very well motivated and take great care to do their best work all of the time. There is a delightful atmosphere as pupils are working as they support each other so well and offer help if they see that a classmate is struggling with their work. Rates of attendance are above average, reflecting pupils' great enjoyment of school.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They understand the school's systems for rewarding good behaviour such as the awarding of house points. They feel that they are applied consistently by staff.
- Almost all parents who completed the online questionnaire, and all parents who spoke to inspectors, said that they have no concerns about behaviour. School records show that incidents of poor behaviour in the classrooms are extremely rare but when they do occur, they are dealt with very effectively.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because at breaktimes pupils are not thoughtful enough about how their boisterous play, especially when they are playing with balls, may affect others. At these times, pupils do not always follow the school's rules well enough, even though they are very clear about what they are.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress across the school, developing new skills and understanding quickly most of the time. Weaknesses identified in pupils' progress in writing that were identified at the previous inspection have been tackled well. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 has risen since then in reading, writing and mathematics and was above average in 2015. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- While Year 2 attainment in 2015 was lower than usual, this reflected good progress from lower than usual starting points. The current Year 2 pupils are already working at higher levels. Across Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils read and write confidently. The school has a policy that pupils should 'Read, read and read some more'. This helps them to improve their skills quickly and to develop a love of reading. Pupils write enthusiastically, showing a good sense of audience and a good understanding of basic grammar, and spelling and punctuation rules.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of phonics, with almost all reaching the expected level in national screenings by the end of Year 2 in 2015. Pupils, including those who find reading more difficult, use their phonics skills confidently to break down words and to help them read.
- In mathematics, younger pupils count confidently. By Year 6, pupils successfully apply their number skills to carry out investigations when, for example, working out the area of a classroom or the cost of items that have been reduced in a sale by different percentages.
- The school successfully ensures that all groups, including the most able and the very small number of disadvantaged pupils, make good progress over time.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability receive good support, enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge quickly. There are well-tailored programmes for pupils with especially complex needs that cater successfully for their social, emotional and academic development through well-focused one-to-one support.
- While progress is good in most subjects and especially so in English and mathematics, pupils do not always produce the same high quality of work in history and geography. Topics are not always covered in sufficient detail to enable pupils to develop an appropriate range of skills, knowledge and understanding for their ability.

Early years provision

is good

- Children are well prepared both socially and academically for life in Year 1. They make good progress in the Reception class because they are taught well. By the end of the Reception Year, an above-average proportion of children have reached a good level of development for their age, although only a small number reach beyond this.
- Staff in the Reception class work together extremely well. They have a very good understanding of the early years curriculum. They plan activities that engage children and motivate them to learn. Children's knowledge and skills are assessed regularly and activities are then provided that capture children's interests and build on what they already know.
- Work areas are bright, welcoming and stimulating and are very well organised so that children can investigate and explore their own ideas. Outdoor provision is especially strong. Children especially love working in the extremely well-planned and resourced outdoor area when, for example, making large structures, such as bridges to cycle under, or exploring materials by making 'magic potions' for 'The Big, Bad Wolf.'
- Early literacy skills are taught particularly well. Children quickly gain an understanding of the sounds that letters make. Children make an extremely good start to learning to write because it is given a high focus throughout the school day. Consequently, many children are already beginning to write short words or, with the help of an adult, simple sentences.
- There are good systems for assessing children's prior learning. Adults use this information well to provide the right level of challenge for children most of the time. However, just occasionally, the most-able children do not receive enough adult support in developing their ideas so that skills can improve even more quickly.
- Children behave well. They are extremely happy in class. Children show perseverance in their learning because they are interested in what they are doing. They are active and inquisitive learners who work well together and are happy to share. They are well supervised in a safe environment. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are very thorough. There are no breaches of welfare arrangements.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. Leaders ensure that all children, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs or disability, make good progress. They have a good understanding of the main priorities, including doing more to ensure that a greater number of children reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of the year.
- Adults engage extremely well with children's families. Information is shared with parents frequently and they are regularly invited into school. They are able to contribute to their children's learning by, for example, writing comments in learning journals or identifying 'WOW' moments at home. Consequently, parents are very pleased with early years provision, typically making comments such as, 'the learning is made fun for the children and makes it so that they have a "want to learn" attitude', and 'my child has settled so quickly and is doing so well'.

School details

Unique reference number	117289
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10001916

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ash Patil
Headteacher	Tracey Ali
Telephone number	01923 720507
Website	www.annetthills.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@arnetthills.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 October 2013

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school with seven single-age classes. Children in the early years provision are taught in the Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to looked after children and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils in Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 19 lessons, over half of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 160 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to inspection questionnaires from 13 members of staff.

Inspection team

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