

Harwood Hill Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Harwood Close, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 7AG

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are making a positive impact on the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils after a period of instability for the school.
- Pupils' outcomes are rising throughout the school as a result of several key appointments made by leaders.
- By the end of key stage 2, pupils make good progress in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is improving quickly.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They demonstrate respect for all members of the school community and have pride in their school. Attendance has improved for all groups of pupils.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, which they use well to plan lessons that motivate pupils to learn.
- Lower-attaining pupils make good progress. The support they receive is effective and tailored to their needs.
- The culture of safeguarding is embedded across the school. Members of staff recognise their duty to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The curriculum design is broad and relevant to the pupils and develops their key skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Teaching in the early years is good and children make good progress from differing starting points.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven throughout the school's curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress because teaching is well matched to their needs and leaders spend additional funds well.
- The school is an orderly and calm learning environment. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. Pupils are safe and feel safe.
- Leaders are now developing the role and skills of middle leaders. Nonetheless, further work is needed for them to fully contribute to continued school improvement.
- Teachers' questioning of pupils does not consistently allow pupils to explain their reasoning, especially for the most able pupils in mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing the roles and skills of middle leaders to enable them to fully contribute to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for their areas of responsibilities
 - communicating more effectively with all members of the school community, and developing a broader range of strategies to involve parents in their child's learning, in order for them to see the impact of policies and procedures in place.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and accelerate pupils' progress further by:
 - ensuring that teaching provides a high level of challenge for the most able pupils
 - ensuring that teachers use highly effective questioning, to deepen pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, especially in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and deputy head have a clear vision for the school, which is shared by staff and governors. Senior leaders' actions over the past 12 months, and their drive for improvement, have ensured that the school has maintained its good standard of education since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have steered the school well through recent changes in school staff. There have been numerous staff changes at all levels over the past three years and this has led to members of the school community feeling anxious about the changes being made. However, since the appointment of the current headteacher in September 2016, the school has seen an upturn in outcomes and the quality of teaching. One parent commented that, 'The new head has made a significant difference to the school already, bringing in good staff and focusing on improving areas that are important for our children, including learning and discipline.'
- Leaders have been proactive in recruiting staff to replace the teachers who have left. However, this has not always been successful due to the recruitment issues within the local area. Agency staff have been appointed to ensure that the school is fully staffed. This has not always been successful because, despite leaders' best efforts, some appointments have left without prior notice. Some parents feel that this has not always been communicated effectively and this has caused some worry.
- Senior leaders are forward thinking and constantly seek to improve the school. For example, a review of the school's curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. There is good capacity for further improvement thanks to leaders' recent appointments across the school.
- Leaders acted quickly to address the shortfall in outcomes in previous years. As a result of improved monitoring of teaching and learning, progress in reading and writing was above national figures in 2017 and progress in mathematics was significantly higher than in previous years.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers have increased their phonic knowledge. This has given rise to bespoke teaching plans to enable those pupils who need it to begin to catch up. As a result, results in phonics are rising. Leaders know there is more to do to improve this aspect so that phonics teaching is consistently strong.
- Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils, and the impact of pupil premium funding, effectively. Staff support, both pastoral and academic, is enabling pupils to make good progress. Leaders' noteworthy strategy was the introduction of 'immediate intervention', which allows pupils to receive support in the afternoons to reinforce key learning points from the morning sessions.
- Leaders monitor the progress of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities extremely well. They ensure that the additional funding to help these pupils is deployed very effectively. Consequently, these pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have ensured that the physical education and sport premium is used

effectively. The school offers pupils many sporting activities and has won awards at local level in competitive sporting events. There are a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, as well as good use of additional sports coaches to model good practice to staff.

- The wide-ranging curriculum provides pupils with a variety of learning opportunities. Topics such as World War Two have been taught particularly well, with pupils writing sensitively about the Holocaust. Music is also taught well. The school has a band that play during assemblies and were observed practicing with the whole school in preparation for their community Remembrance Day service.
- The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, 'Parent View', are positive about the school. They commented that, 'The school staff are kind and encourage my children to do well', and, 'I am very happy with the way both my children have settled into school and the progress that they are making every week.' A minority of parents were not as positive and were particularly concerned about the lack of communication. This was acknowledged by school leaders.
- Staff have their performance measured through the annual performance management system. The system for teachers and teaching assistants is now closely linked to targets identified on the school's development plan. However, the system does not yet operate within a timetable which allows senior leaders to use it more effectively in improving the quality of teaching.
- The local authority has played a significant role in the recent improvements. Leaders have been receptive to ideas and suggestions that have been made. For example, the recent work to promote the new local authority mathematics programme is welcomed by staff and is playing a significant role in improving pupils' progress in mathematics.
- School leaders also recognise the importance of developing opportunities for pupils to experience life outside the area in which they live. An annual residential trip for Year 6 and Year 4 pupils gives pupils an opportunity to visit places of interest.
- The school's assessment approach ensures that all pupils, including key groups of pupils, are monitored carefully. However, leaders do not consistently ensure that checks on teaching and learning bring about the strongest possible progress for the most able pupils.
- Senior leaders are, rightly, developing an increasing focus on improving the quality of learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. Senior leaders are aware that there is more work to do to ensure that middle leaders fully contribute to effective school improvement work. An example of this is with subject leadership. Subject leaders are not yet embedded into the overall leadership model, as the staff are relatively new in post.

Governance of the school

- The governing body knows the school well. It has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school.
- Governors have a wide range of skills and knowledge about both governance and the local community. Minutes from governing body meetings show that governors hold leaders to account, particularly regarding pupils' progress and school finances.

- Governors fulfil their statutory duties earnestly, undertaking additional training that helps inform these duties, for example in preventing radicalisation or in child protection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have a robust system for ensuring that the safeguarding of pupils is paramount. All adults in the school understand that it is their responsibility to pass on any concerns they may have about pupils to the assigned staff. Consequently, the responsibility for reporting concerns by all members of staff results in a shared culture of safeguarding.
- When concerns arise, leaders act swiftly to ensure that information is recorded and passed on to relevant agencies. Files are well managed and clearly demonstrate timely referrals, which are actioned and followed through carefully.
- Leaders have ensured that routine checks take place when recruiting staff. As a result, recruitment procedures are robust and checks on staff ensure that safeguarding pupils is central to the whole process.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in English and mathematics. Teachers have high expectations, especially for lower- and middle-ability pupils, who respond positively to the challenge. Pupils say they enjoy challenging themselves, particularly in mathematics lessons.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress in lessons and adapt their teaching in the light of their findings. Pupils who are at risk of falling behind catch up quickly and additional adults support pupils who need extra help in lessons. Should a pupil begin to fall behind or not be clear about a concept, staff pick this up quickly and extra help is put in place. This swift action ensures that pupils of all ages and abilities are given help and support as soon as possible.
- In response to lower than expected outcomes in mathematics, the school has changed the teaching of mathematics to give pupils more chances to really think about their reasoning and understanding of mathematics in their workbooks.
- Teacher assessments of pupils are accurate and show clearly the next steps required to help them make progress. Pupils' books show that the majority are challenged well and are accessing a curriculum which is helping them to build on their prior knowledge. As a result, the proportion of pupils working at age-related expectations across the school is increasing.
- Teachers' feedback on writing has the precision needed to help all pupils improve their sentence structure and use of accurate grammar. Teachers are generally following the school's feedback policy but some misconceptions and errors by pupils remain unnoticed.
- Classrooms are bright and well organised. Pupils have a wide range of resources, which they use effectively to help them learn. Year 3 pupils were observed making effective

use of mathematics resources to deepen their subtraction skills.

- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and plan carefully to meet pupils' needs.
- Additional adults are deployed well. They provide timely and caring support. This helps pupils gain confidence and independence in their learning skills.
- Staff work very closely together to support the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, including those who are disadvantaged. Support staff are skillful at asking questions and have very good levels of understanding about the work set for pupils. This enables pupils to learn quickly and effectively. 'Immediate intervention' was observed by inspectors on several occasions and was effective at all times due to support staff subject knowledge and use of age-appropriate language.
- Additional adults are deployed well. They provide timely and caring support. This helps pupils gain confidence and independence in their learning skills.
- However, in a wide range of lessons, teachers' questioning does not sufficiently probe pupils' understanding and develop their knowledge, and does not allow sufficient time for pupils to discuss their answers or explain their reasoning.
- Teachers do not consistently provide the high level of challenge to the most able pupils that will enable these pupils to exceed. At times, work that is set can be too easy for pupils and does not challenge them every day, especially in mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils value the opportunities provided to take on responsibilities around the school. They are confident, and increasingly more independent, learners who enjoy attending school.
- Pupils have an appropriate understanding of different types of bullying. They know that bullying is wrong and that it will not be tolerated at the school. They told inspectors that the majority of adults stop any bullying that may occur and 'sort it out'.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and talk with confidence about how to keep safe online.
- Pupils are well supervised at lunch and breaktimes. They enjoy playing with the equipment available, especially the climbing resources, and get along well together. Pupils were observed using the traverse wall and supporting each other to get across successfully.
- The curriculum supports the vast majority of pupils well. As a result, most demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- During lessons, pupils listen carefully, responding to the instructions of adults and thoughtfully to the needs of other pupils. During the inspection, disruption in lessons and occasions where pupils were distracted were rare. This is because the work their teachers give them is very interesting and matched well to pupils' interests and learning needs.
- Few incidents of difficult behaviour have been logged over the past six months and none has resulted in the permanent exclusion of a pupil. This is because pupils quickly learn to regulate their own behaviour and also to be kind to others. Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy, which is understood by pupils and has played a key role in the positive behaviour on display.
- Pupils respond extremely well to adults' high expectations of their behaviour. Pupils hold doors open for their peers and members of staff and speak about their school with immense pride.
- Absence from school has been high in the past, but the work of the leaders in recent years to support pupils and families is paying off and attendance was much improved last year. Levels of persistent absence have also been reduced to below the national average. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and on time. However, a small number of pupils are still regularly absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils at the school make good progress from a wide range of starting points, many typically below those of pupils nationally. The progress pupils make by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics has improved significantly. The proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are increasing.
- Progress in reading and writing for pupils at the end of key stage 2 is in line with the national averages. However, while improving significantly, progress within mathematics was below the national average in 2017. Current pupils are making effective progress and their workbooks show that the improving trend is continuing.
- Writing results at key stage 1 in 2017 were lower than expected. Current pupils are making strong progress in writing across the key stage as a result of more effective feedback and opportunities to practise the skills being taught in lessons.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding wisely to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. Determined actions taken by leaders ensure that the dedicated interventions work effectively with these pupils, as well as with other key stage 2 pupils, where there is a need to improve attainment. As a result, disadvantaged pupils typically make good progress in the core areas of learning.

- Pupils are making good progress in a wide range of subjects outside of English and mathematics. 'Topic' workbooks show that, over time, the majority of pupils make positive progress in most subjects. Pupils are developing key skills required to be historians, musicians and geographers. In some subjects, however, progress is limited because subject leaders are not yet effectively monitoring the progress of pupils.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points. The school's special educational needs coordinator ensures that the emotional needs of identified pupils are met through effective pastoral support.
- Progress for the most able pupils is not as effective. The challenge that is provided is not always matched to pupils' needs. As a result, the most able do not always make sufficient progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the early years. Regular checks on children's learning ensure that planned activities build on what children can do, know and understand. Consequently, children in the early years get off to a good start and most make good progress overall.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years and they are well prepared for the learning they will experience in Year 1. Leaders of the early years are determinedly focused on improving the outcomes for all children.
- Children are happy and confident to come to school. Clear routines and structures are already well established because adults support children effectively to build their independence and confidence. Consequently, children behave well and enjoy school.
- Parents welcome systems for sharing what their children have been learning at school and regularly contribute to their children's learning journeys. One parent commented, 'My child attended the Nursery and is now in Reception. She has enjoyed her time at Harwood Hill and has thrived since starting.'
- Children willingly initiate their own learning and teachers give them strong support when they do so. Teaching assistants ensure that transitions are calm and orderly. They care for the children well.
- Staff make regular observations of children's learning, and use this information well to inform planning. At times, assessment opportunities were missed and, therefore, opportunities to challenge and question children's thinking were not fully utilised.
- Across the early years, provision is organised and staff are well trained in providing pupils with challenging activities in and out of the classroom. Children are motivated and enjoy joining in with the broad range of activities on offer. For example, a group of boys enthusiastically told inspectors about their hunt for squirrels in Percy Park Keeper's Hut.
- Children in the early years show positive attitudes to learning and make good progress because teachers' careful planning has created interesting ways for them to explore their learning. For example, during the inspection, children in the Nursery were outside looking for examples of things that symbolised autumn on their 'Wednesday welly

walk'.

- In the newly designed outdoor learning environment, there are activities for children to investigate, which help them to develop the skills they need for successful learning. These include opportunities to write and reason in mathematics. Children can select the resources they need for themselves, for example when children used the ride-on toys to select numbered cars for parking.
- Learning opportunities are well matched to their needs. As a result, different groups of children, including the most able and disadvantaged, are making good progress.
- The number of children who reach, or exceed, the early learning goals in reading, writing and mathematics is increasing. However, leaders correctly identify that developments in these areas of learning need to be consolidated in order to raise children's attainment further. The new outside provision and nursery provision are providing this.

School details

Unique reference number	117227
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10037630

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Cane
Headteacher	Yvette Page
Telephone number	01707 322 855
Website	www.harwood.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@harwood.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Harwood Hill Junior Mixed Infant School is an average-sized primary school.
- Most children attend Nursery part time. All children attend the Reception class full time.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium grant is broadly average.

- Since the last inspection, the school has experienced significant staffing changes, including the senior leadership team. Following an initial appointment and then an interim appointment, the current headteacher has been in post since September 2016. The current deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2017.
- The school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessments over time. They observed learning in classes and in small groups.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work and talked to them about their work. They listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes, visited the dining hall at lunchtimes and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. They met formally with a group of pupils.
- An inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors.
- An inspector met a representative of the local authority who has provided support to the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 54 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View) and also obtained the views of staff members. The school's most recent survey of parents' views was also considered.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, school development plans, information about teachers' performance and external views of the school. Inspectors scrutinised school records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joseph Figg, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Copping

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017