



Pixmore Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117259
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280026
Inspection dates 21 February 2006 to 22 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Marina Gough LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rushby Mead
School category	Community		SG6 1RS
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462 620555
Number on roll	207	Fax number	01462 623555
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Jonathan Burstow
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr. Ben Parry

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most children come from the local area, and their socio-economic circumstances are mixed. Most children are White British and a small number of children have English as an additional language. The percentage of children eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than the national average. About one quarter of children have learning difficulties, including five who have statements of special educational needs. The children's attainment when they start school is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Following a sharp decline shortly after the last inspection, the school has made good progress in addressing the issues that were identified, and is now providing a satisfactory and improving quality of education for all children. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The school knows itself very well, and its excellent self-evaluation closely mirrors the inspection findings, and shows clearly the areas where improvements need to be made. Priorities for development are appropriate, and include raising standards further in mathematics, by improving the children's ability to solve problems, raising standards in writing by providing more opportunities for writing across the curriculum, and improving the quality of teaching where it has weaknesses. By the time children leave the school they attain average standards in English, mathematics and science. Children make satisfactory progress overall, but could do even better if the teaching in Years 3 and 4 was of a higher standard. At times, in Years 3 and 4 there is not enough challenge and the management of behaviour is not consistent. Children with learning difficulties make good progress because of the additional support they receive. The school has a warm and friendly ethos. Children behave well, and have positive attitudes to work, especially when teaching is lively and really grabs their interest. The school is extremely effective in the way in which it seeks the views of children and involves them in the decision making process. Overall, leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The governing body is supportive, and satisfactorily fulfils its duties. Because of the strong leadership of the headteacher, and the commitment of staff, the school is well placed for further and continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards in mathematics by providing more opportunities for children to solve problems and carry out open ended investigations.
- Provide more opportunities for children to practise their writing skills in subjects other than literacy.
- Increase the rate of children's progress by improving the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When children join the school in Year 3, their attainment is broadly average. Although children make satisfactory progress overall, the rate of progress as they move through the school is inconsistent. At times in Years 3 and 4, children do not make the progress of which they are capable, because there are weaknesses in the teaching. Children do considerably better in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is more challenging and where the rate of learning is quicker. In Years 5 and 6 children make good progress. The school uses accurate assessment information to set suitably challenging targets which children meet. Throughout the school, children with learning difficulties make good progress because of the good additional support they receive in class from teaching

assistants. By the end of Year 6, children attain standards that are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Over the years, standards in English and science have been relatively steady. Standards in mathematics have improved, although they are still not as high as they could be. Children sometimes have difficulty in using and applying their mathematical skills in different ways, and in solving investigations and open ended problems where several answers can be correct. The school has identified writing as an area for whole school development. Whilst good progress is being made towards this target within literacy lessons, there are too few additional opportunities for children to write about their ideas in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development and well-being are good. The school effectively promotes the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result they are well mannered, have a clear sense of right and wrong, and respect for the traditions, customs and beliefs of those from other cultures. The Saturday morning Punjabi Club is a popular community provision that does much to raise the children's awareness of and interest in other cultures. Children enjoy coming to school, and attendance is similar to the national average. Their behaviour in class is mainly good, although when lessons lack pace, some become restless. Staff deal effectively and consistently with the rare incidents of teasing or minor bullying and children say that they feel safe and happy. Children make a good contribution to the running of the school, in their role as playtime 'buddies' and lunchtime helpers. The school council has a real influence on what happens around school, and members take their duties and responsibilities seriously. Children develop a satisfactory range of skills to help them in the next stage of their education, and have a good sense of how they can support the school and the wider community. They develop a satisfactory understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, but although the school actively promotes healthy eating, children do not always make wise choices themselves for their snacks. Children develop a good awareness of how to keep safe, and good links with external agencies ensure they are well informed about the dangers of drug misuse.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Years 5 and 6, the quality of teaching is good, and has some outstanding features. In Years 3 and 4, teaching is mostly satisfactory, but whilst there are some good features, there are also some weaknesses. In Years 5 and 6 where teaching is good or better, teachers present activities in a lively way that captures the children's interest, and motivates them well in their learning. Questions are used very well to probe the children's thinking and to extend the higher attainers. Lessons move at a good pace so that children maintain good levels of concentration, and the good use of resources helps children to understand new ideas.

In Years 3 and 4, teaching is not always sufficiently challenging and so children do not always make enough progress. At times, especially when the pace of lessons is too slow, behaviour is not well managed, and too much is made of minor transgressions, interrupting the flow of the lesson. Throughout the school, good use is made of teaching assistants who work well with small groups of children who need additional support. The school's systems for assessing and measuring the children's progress and attainment are satisfactory. A good start has been made in helping the children to see the next steps of their learning, and in encouraging them to evaluate their own learning. However, the practice of giving individual targets to each pupil is not yet consistently applied.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The long morning sessions are mainly taken up with literacy and numeracy lessons, leaving only a limited amount of time available for other subjects. The school has recognised that there are too few opportunities for children to use and apply the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, and for them to practise and work on their investigative skills. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, and a very high proportion of children take part in the many clubs that are on offer.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, support and guidance. Children agree that they feel very safe in school, and that they are happy. They know they can turn to any member of staff if they have a problem. The school is very effective in the way in which it seeks the views of children so that they have a real input into how the school is run. Older children have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their learning, and are keen to explain what they have to do to improve their work further. The school has very good systems in place for ensuring the safety of children. Child protection procedures are very well established, and staff have undergone training. Good systems are in place to deal with children who are ill or hurt, and governors carry out regular safety checks of the premises. The school has good links with a number of external agencies so that vulnerable children, and children with learning difficulties, can be well supported.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The headteacher, who was appointed after the last inspection, has done a good job in improving the school over the past few years. Shortly after his appointment, he quickly identified that the school had sharply declined, and worked closely with the local authority to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result of this

rapid turnaround, good progress has been made in addressing the issues from the last report. The headteacher has engendered a very positive spirit amongst staff, so that change is tackled with enthusiasm and a real sense of purpose. He has set up a leadership team which is beginning to take some of the initiative for school improvement, and which shares his clear vision for how the school can improve still further. Subject leaders are taking increasing responsibility for their areas, and in information and communication technology, for example, very good progress has been made in recent years. The school's self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is excellent and shows that the school knows itself really well. The issues arising from the current inspection have already been identified by the school, and are being addressed. Parents are appreciative of the way in which they are consulted about important issues, and feel well informed about what happens in school. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors are keen, hard-working and very supportive, but the governing body is not at full strength, and so the workload is at times onerous for individual governors.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making Mrs Hall and myself so welcome when we visited your school a short time ago. We really enjoyed talking to you, and thought you were well behaved, polite and friendly. We were pleased to see how hard you worked, although we noticed in some classes that, when work was too easy, or lessons were a bit slow to get going, you became restless and lost concentration. We have asked your teachers to try to make sure that this doesn't happen. We know that through the school council you have the chance to give your views about life in school, and agree with you that your teachers really listen well to what you have to say, and try to act upon your suggestions. We spent some time looking at your books, as well as joining you in lessons. We found that you are better at English and science than you are at mathematics. Although most of you can work out sums when you know exactly what you have to do, you sometimes have difficulty in solving problems that are written in words. We know that teachers are already trying to improve your mathematics skills, and we have asked them to look at more ways of helping you. One of the things that pleased us most was the way in which your teachers and classroom assistants help those of you who have difficulties with your work, so that you can do your best. From talking with you, we know that many of you attend the wide variety of after school and lunchtime clubs that the school puts on for you. Whilst you had no complaints about your lessons, we felt that the morning sessions could be made more interesting. At the moment they are mostly used only for literacy and numeracy, and we have talked to your teachers about perhaps including another subject in the morning sessions so that you have more opportunities to practise writing in other subjects, and so you have a bit more variety. We agree with you entirely that your headteacher is doing a good job in running the school. Together with the staff and governors, he makes sure that you are safe, happy and well cared for.