



Northlands Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115243
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290176
Inspection dates 14–15 December 2006
Reporting inspector Raminder Arora

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Winifred Road
School category	Foundation		Pitsea, Pitsea
Age range of pupils	7–11		Basildon, Essex SS13 3JQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268 553366
Number on roll (school)	249	Fax number	01268 552671
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Alan Morgan
		Headteacher	Mr Stephen Acton
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	14–15 December 2006	290176

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Northlands Junior School is a foundation school of average size. Most pupils are of white British heritage and transfer from the infant school sharing the same site. Entitlement to free school meals is above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Mobility of pupils is broadly average. The school runs a breakfast club and is working towards 'Healthy Schools' status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' standards and achievement.

Northlands Junior School is a welcoming place and well liked by the parents and pupils. Due to the decline in pupils' standards and achievement, the overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate. Previously unsatisfactory teaching in some year groups has led to inconsistent and inadequate progress.

When they join the school pupils' attainment is variable and a little below average. By the time they leave in Year 6, standards are well below average and pupils have not achieved well enough. The decline in standards has been clearly identified by the newly organised senior management team and a nationally recognised strategy has been initiated to make improvements. Unsatisfactory teaching has been successfully eliminated and teaching is now satisfactory, with examples of good and even outstanding practice. Although there has been little time to evaluate the impact of this initiative, early indications are that pupils are making better progress than they have done in the past. Class targets have been set, and pupils usually know what they are aiming for. In most lessons pupils are reminded of their targets, but marking does not always help them to understand what they have to do in order to reach higher standards. Practice across the school is inconsistent, with some teachers regularly reviewing targets with pupils and others not. Although teaching and learning continue to be monitored, there is too little focus on where weaknesses are and how these can be tackled.

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum but the amount of time allocated to the teaching week is below what is normally recommended in a junior school. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to learn and play together and they make a satisfactory contribution to the life of the school. Adequate care, guidance and support is provided and the programme for personal, social and health education results in pupils feeling safe and knowing that there is an adult they can go to in case of difficulty.

As a result of the effective steps taken to identify and tackle underachievement, there is clear evidence of recent improvements. For example, the regular monitoring of teaching and learning, and tracking of pupils' progress are underway and improvements are proving beneficial. Staff, governors and pupils are united in their determination to raise standards. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Improvement since the last inspection is inadequate overall, despite recent progress, as not enough has been done to stem the decline in standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise standards and achievement in English, Mathematics and science, by ensuring that assessment information is used effectively to meet pupils' needs and that marking helps them know what they should do to improve.
- use more regular and effective monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that teaching is consistently good and challenges all pupils, particularly the most able.
- review the allocation and use of teaching time in line with the government's guidelines.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The school's own data shows that pupils have not made enough progress during their time in school. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 have declined over the last two years and are now well below average in English, mathematics and science. Whilst slightly improved in science, the standards in English have dipped further in the recent test results. This represents inadequate progress and underachievement. Although the school sets appropriately challenging targets for pupils in Year 6, too few meet them. Steps have now been taken to halt this decline, and early indications are that all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are making more progress than they have previously. However, it is too soon to see the full impact on standards in Year 6. Whilst pupils are currently making better progress, they have not progressed well enough to fully overcome previous underachievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils on the school council talk enthusiastically about their plans to sell fruit and grow their own vegetables. They understand about the need to keep healthy and the importance of exercise. Many of them speak highly of the school dinners and the choices they have. Pupils report that they feel safe and that there is always an adult to sort out their problems. Issues worrying them are discussed during personal, social and health education sessions. Attendance is below average, mainly due to the poor attendance of a few families. The school does all it can, for example, awarding certificates and calling on the first day of absence. Pupils learn about their local area by welcoming visitors to school and performing concerts both in and out of school. They make satisfactory progress towards the skills they will need in later life by learning to work together, discussing ideas and listening to each other.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although this has not always been so. The purpose of each lesson is usually clear and shared with pupils so that they know what they are expected to learn. Most lessons are lively and interesting, although sometimes teachers talk too much and affect the pace of the lesson when pupils just want to get on with their work. Targets are set for each class and most teachers are beginning to carefully track pupils' progress. However, they do not yet use the assessment data effectively to plan work that matches the needs of all in the class. Occasionally pupils, particularly the more able, are insufficiently challenged and consequently make slow progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the extra activities and clubs before and after school, and are looking forward to the residential trip later next year. They speak highly of a popular lunchtime club, which offers pupils who find it difficult to cope in the playground a refuge where they can play board games. Visitors into the school enrich pupils' learning by providing opportunities for art, drama and singing. The amount of taught time is below that normally allocated for a junior school and, although the timetables have been organised into manageable slots, there is insufficient time spent on subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result pupils do not get a good balance of experiences. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are offered the opportunity to go swimming, but parents have to pay for this and consequently, some pupils do not learn to swim.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes satisfactory care of the pupils. They feel safe in school, but some older girls express concern over the fact that they have to change in the same room as the boys for sporting activities. The academic guidance provided for all pupils is satisfactory. Class targets for English and mathematics have been set for each year group. When asked, pupils know what these targets are but are unsure what they have to do to reach them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have satisfactory support for their learning. There has been a recent review of the support they receive and detailed records are now kept to ensure that they make satisfactory progress. However, the current assessment process is very new and it is too early to assess how much progress each pupil has made.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, senior staff and the subject leaders have carried out detailed analysis of how much progress each child is making. As a result of the swift action taken, the progress of pupils is improving. The school's own self-evaluation is accurate when judging achievement and standards, but it is too positive when judging other aspects of the school's work. Governors are supportive of the school and are beginning to hold the school to account for the low standards and poor progress. They are very aware of the school's strengths and the areas of weakness that need to be tackled. Weaknesses in teaching have been addressed which is improving the rate of pupils' progress. However, these improvements are not yet consistent because there are differences in the way aspects of the school are monitored and improved. For example, the practice across the school in assessing how well pupils are doing is variable. Some teachers regularly assess pupils' performance against the targets set, while others are less conscientious. Similarly, although much has been done to improve teaching by the senior staff, their monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently regular or robust.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Northlands Junior School, Winifred Road, Pitsea, Basildon, Essex, SS13 3 JQ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed watching your lessons and talking to you. This helped us to find out the good things about your school and the things that should be better. We know that most of you enjoy coming to school and value what it has to offer you.

These are the things we like about your school:

- Your school is friendly and welcoming.
- You behave appropriately and have positive relationships with each other.
- We were happy to see that all staff listen to you and make sure that you are safe and know who to go to when in need of help.
- We agree with the targets the school has set itself to make your learning even more enjoyable, and we are confident that you will help the school to meet them.

Your headteacher and staff are determined to ensure that you all make good progress and no one is behind in his or her learning. We were very pleased to see so many of you receiving achievement awards and certificates in the assembly.

These are the things that need improving:

- Teachers need to help you to make better progress in English, mathematics and science by giving you work that matches your ability and also give you more information about what you need to do to improve.
- We have asked your teachers for more lessons that are good and challenge you to work even harder.
- Headteacher and governors also need to ensure that you all spend enough time learning in each subject.

I look forward to hearing more about your school's success.

Yours sincerely

Raminder Arora

Lead Inspector