



Hartsfield Junior Mixed and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117376
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290813
Inspection date 3 October 2006
Reporting inspector Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Clothall Road
School category	Community		Baldock
Age range of pupils	4-11		Hertfordshire SG7 6PB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462895267
Number on roll (school)	397	Fax number	01462894741
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr I Knighton
		Headteacher	Mrs P Sawyer
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector over one day.

Description of the school

Hartsfield Junior and Infant School is a larger than average primary school serving an area of mostly private housing. Most pupils are from a White British background but there is a small proportion from a range of different minority ethnic groups. A number of pupils have English as an additional language but few are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. When they start school the children's knowledge and understanding is typical of children nationally or slightly better. The school is part of a Primary Strategy Learning Network. This enables schools to work together and share good practice on a number of curricular issues. The school was recently awarded a 'Health Promoting School' accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

At the last inspection the school was described as very good. The strengths found then have been built on further and the school's effectiveness is now outstanding. These findings are supported by the school's own evaluation which is honest and accurately reflects where particular strengths and areas for further development lie. The school provides outstanding value for money. The major reason for the school's success and its very good improvement since the last inspection is the excellent leadership and management provided by the headteacher and her senior management team. Their work has been clearly focused on the most important issues and a continuous drive to raise standards and provide the best for each pupil. The improvements made over recent years reflect the school's ethos of always wanting to do better. This is also evident in the way the school takes a leading part in initiatives, such as the local network of schools, which is providing very good opportunities for schools to innovate with new ideas and methods and to share best practice. The network has already had a strong impact on the quality of provision in physical education and on dance and drama in the school. Another improvement has been the way teachers share the purpose of lessons with pupils, although they do not always make it fully clear to pupils what is expected of them and what they need to do to gain success. The standards pupils achieve are well above average. Standards in science are exceptionally high, and in mathematics and reading they are often very high. It is evident from the work displayed that the school also achieves high standards in art and design. Where standards are not as high, as has been the case in writing recently, the leadership recognises this and quickly attempts to improve matters. This process of change for the better is evident in the Foundation Stage. Past weaknesses in provision have been addressed through an improved curriculum, including better planned outdoor access, and a smoother transition from Reception to Year 1. The provision in the Foundation Stage is now good and is improving rapidly, and the quality of the teaching is as strong as elsewhere in the school. Work to improve writing throughout the school has yet to have a significant impact on standards and more remains to be done. Parents are rightly very happy with the education provided in the school. One said their daughter had, 'thrived academically and as an independent thinker'. A number have said that they would like more information about their child's work, teaching methods and how well they are progressing. Pupils are very positive about their school. They clearly enjoy school life and this is reflected in their good attendance. They make the most of the outstanding opportunities provided for learning and for their personal development. Their behaviour is excellent and this helps the teachers teach to the high level that they do.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English to those found in mathematics and science, by improving pupils' writing skills and sharing more information with parents about how they can help their children.
- Make it more clear to pupils exactly what is expected of them in each lesson.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils have attained consistently very high standards over a number of years. By the end of Year 6 pupils have made outstanding progress, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. In the 2006 tests, the Year 6 pupils reached high standards in reading, and exceptionally high standards in mathematics and science. Standards in writing, although still above average, show that the pupils' progress is not as high in this area. This is the current major focus for school improvement. In Year 2, teachers' assessments show that there were also above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2006, although only an average proportion reached the higher Level 3. In the Foundation Stage children make at least good progress from the levels they are at when they enter the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are very well aware of how to stay healthy and they have many opportunities to work together and co-operate on shared tasks. The school council is a particularly articulate group and they have a very positive impact on school life. They talk enthusiastically about their work and especially about the extra-curricular opportunities and chances to take part in subjects such as music and drama. The school has improved the pupils' cultural development since the last inspection and they have many opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures and faiths. Along with their spiritual, social and moral development this is now outstanding. Attendance levels are good and the school works hard to reinforce the importance of regular attendance with parents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The very positive outcomes show that pupils' learning is outstanding and it is the very strong teaching which is largely responsible for this. Teachers enjoy excellent relationships with pupils, and this means the children want to do well for them. Lessons are well planned and challenging. Teachers support pupils well through very good marking and assessment systems, especially those that encourage pupils to assess for themselves how well they have done.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The exceptionally effectively planned curriculum contributes much to the school's high standards. The curriculum has been planned by the school to include as many learning opportunities as the timetable allows. Teachers make lessons 'Interesting and fun', as the school council said. Equal importance is given to subjects such as art, music and physical education. The extra-curricular activities offer pupils of almost all ages very good opportunities to develop their skills and interests to a high level. These include some more unusual activities such as lacrosse and a chance for particularly talented pupils to extend their dance skills with expert support from the local secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school takes excellent care of the pupils and they say how safe they feel at school. They are also very aware of the range of ways they need to keep themselves safe both in and out of school, referring to the use of the Internet or to their planned trips to the local fairground. Pupils say there is no bullying but if it did occur they are confident it would be dealt with effectively. The school has robust systems for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their welfare that meet current guidelines. The outstanding level of care is reflected in pupils' personal development and the very high standards they achieve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership and management shown by the headteacher and senior management team is very well supported by the good work of the governing body. Governors have developed their role as critical friends and begun a more organised programme of monitoring visits to help them better understand the school's effectiveness. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is much improved, as is the leadership in the curriculum. This is resulting in even better provision and higher standards. The school improvement plan is very detailed and provides a clear direction for school priorities and how they will be developed and evaluated. The positive impact of recent improvements shows that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 October 2006 Dear Children Hartsfield Junior and Infant School, Clothall Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire. SG7 6PB I want to thank all of you who I met during my recent visit to your school, and especially those of you who I talked to during lunch or in the meeting with the school council. You were very friendly and helpful and also gave me a very clear picture of how happy you are at the school. I agree that you are lucky to be there because your school is giving you an outstanding education. I also enjoyed meeting Geoff the skeleton! The best things about the school are: - The way Mrs Sawyer and the staff work to make sure you have interesting things to do. - The outstanding teaching that enables you to learn a lot. - The extra opportunities you have to learn instruments or join clubs. - The way the school takes part in events with other schools or uses teachers from other schools to teach you more expertly, such as in dance or PE. - Your excellent behaviour which helps the teachers to teach you. - Your knowledge of how to stay healthy and keep safe. - Your excellent standards in reading, mathematics and especially science. You are also very good at art and design. Even so, some thing could be even better. I have asked your teachers to help you better understand how you can be more successful at the activities given to you in lessons, and to carry on helping you to get better at writing. I have also asked them to make sure your parents know more about what and how you are learning at school. The school council also told me they would like more opportunities for drama and the teachers now know this. Many thanks again for your help and the welcome you gave me to your school. Keep working hard and enjoying your time at Hartsfield. Yours sincerely
Geof Timms (Lead inspector)