

Hartford Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110696
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	310393
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Beevor
Headteacher	Mrs Miriam Piper
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Mayfield Crescent Hartford Cambridgeshire PE29 1UL
Telephone number	01480 454695
Fax number	01480 375029

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving the local area of Hartford in Huntingdon. Pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds and their attainment on entry is broadly average. Most are of White British heritage but a small proportion come from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of a Black or mixed background. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of with learning difficulties and those with a statement for their educational need are above that usually found and in Years 3 and 4 more than double the national average.

The school has the achieved the ICT (information and communication technology) mark and the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Central to the school's success is the headteacher's vision for ensuring a school community where pupils are 'successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens'. This vision is shared by staff and governors and shines through all of the school's work. Good care, guidance and support for all pupils underpins their success. Consequently, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy school and say they have fun. They are confident to voice their opinions and are adamant that incidents of bullying are rare and in no doubt that, should they have any worries, an adult will help them. Behaviour in and around school is good. Older pupils make an excellent contribution to school life and the wider community, taking on responsibilities in classes and the school with great enthusiasm.

Pupils are successful learners. They achieve well because teaching is good and the interesting curriculum is enriched with a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors. Throughout the school, teaching is founded on good relationships and a thorough knowledge of what pupils know and need to learn next. Proficient teaching assistants play an important part in ensuring pupils' good progress. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is used most effectively to check that they are doing as well as possible, and also to target those needing extra help with learning, or for moderating their behaviour. Consequently, these pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points and have good self-esteem. The small number of pupils who are at the early stages of learning English also make good progress because they have good support and their progress is tracked carefully.

The school has profitable links with a wide range of outside agencies that help pupils' learning and well-being effectively. These include sporting partnerships, which provide good opportunities for pupils to learn new sports and keep themselves fit.

Leadership and management are good. The school has a comprehensive understanding of its strengths and areas where it needs to improve. Indeed, all areas noted for improvement by the inspection had already been identified by the school. The capacity for further improvement is good. School improvement planning is thorough with a clear focus on ensuring pupils' success, not only academically, but also in their personal development. The relatively new senior leadership team is having a good impact on pupils' progress, especially in writing, but recognises that there is more to do to ensure consistent good progress across the school. From the good tracking system, senior managers know that a few pupils are not doing as well as they should and this is most noticeable in mathematics. They have already made a sound start in finding a solution. However, they have not yet been rigorous enough in their monitoring to gain a precise understanding where there are weaknesses in provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Develop the monitoring roles of the senior leadership team to ensure pupils' consistent good progress through the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in national tests for English, mathematics and science are gradually rising with those in English and science slightly above the national average. On entry, standards for the current

Year 6 pupils were below average. Indications are that they will meet the national averages in English and science but be slightly below average in mathematics. Overall, pupils in Year 6 have made good progress from their starting points. The school's focus on improving writing has resulted in very good progress and achievement across the school, particularly for the current Year 5 pupils. Whilst there are some variations in progress in Years 3 and 4, progress for the great majority of pupils is good, except in mathematics where it is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and show that they are happy in school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know right from wrong. Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem because of the good relationships between all. Most are self-motivated and are keen to work hard, so behaviour is good. Pupils have successfully helped to redesign the positive behaviour code and feel school life is better as a result. They enjoy the many rewards that the school offers, such as the 'Hartford Stars'.

Good attendance reflects pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of exercise and a balanced diet. They enjoy physical activity and the nutritious choices of food at lunchtime. They develop a whole host of skills, including those of how to stay safe in water and near traffic. The school council has taken part in discussions, with other schools' councils, about the quality of life in Huntingdon. This has contributed significantly to their understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship. Pupils' good working habits, together with the good progress they make, mean they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Older pupils have activities to do at breaktimes that help to develop a sense of responsibility. For example, they train to become 'Young Leaders' to play with Year 3 pupils. Opportunities for younger pupils to develop leadership roles are less well developed and are highlighted by the school as an area to improve.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are keen to meet their teachers' high expectations for good behaviour and hard work. Lessons are carefully planned to cater for differing abilities, especially for pupils of average and lower ability. Pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn. Towards the end of lessons, they are encouraged to think about what they have learned and they do this honestly. Planning for the more able, in a few cases, does not always identify enough challenge. Pupils' books show they assess their own work and that teachers' good marking and comments help them know how to improve their work. In outstanding lessons, fun but challenging activities are undertaken, which help pupils consolidate and extend their learning at a good rate.

Capable teaching assistants are a valued and valuable part of the teaching team. They have a positive impact on pupils' personal development and academic progress because teachers deploy them very successfully to work with groups and to support individuals.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum develops new knowledge and skills, building effectively on pupils' prior knowledge. Outstanding displays show the wide variety of pupils' work over the year. The school makes the best use of staffs' talents. In art and design, the curriculum and teaching are strong and make a good contribution to pupils' cultural and spiritual development. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. Pupils benefit from the wide range of partnerships the school has with other schools and organisations. The range of visitors and visits brings lessons to life for pupils, such as re-enactment of the route taken by young evacuees in World War II. The curriculum is tailored well to meet the needs of those who need extra support with their learning. The wide range of after-school clubs, run by staff and other organisations, helps to extend pupils' academic and personal skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Many parents confirm that the school looks after their children well. Good procedures are in place to ensure the health and safety of pupils. Lessons in social and emotional understanding have improved pupils' attitudes to one another. Relationships are handled well by staff, such as through anti-bullying weeks and 'listening boxes' in each class. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare in school and are keen for this situation to be maintained. To this effect, the school has recently set up an anti-bullying council to involve pupils in finding additional solutions to preventing situations where bullying may occur. There are thorough systems for monitoring pupils' academic progress in English, mathematics and science. Teachers make good use of this information to group pupils into 'sets' of similar ability for mathematics in Years 3 to 6 and in English in Years 5 and 6. Assessment systems in other subjects are less well advanced. The school has begun to implement a system to assess the skills pupils learn in subjects such as, history and music.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. An excellent feature is the headteacher's commitment to ensuring that all her staff have good opportunities to attend relevant courses to further their professional expertise. As a consequence, staff morale is very high and teamwork is strong. Subject leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable; very keen to drive forward improvement in their subject areas. The school's self-evaluation is good. Members of the relatively new senior leadership team are developing their roles effectively. They are having a particularly good impact on streamlining and using the school's system for tracking pupils' progress in order to raise standards and improve their achievement. Findings from the analysis of this system are used rigorously in school improvement planning. For example, senior managers have correctly identified that more needs to be done to maintain a consistent rate of progress across the school, especially in mathematics. Currently, though, monitoring has not been sufficiently rigorous to pinpoint exactly where the weaknesses in provision are. The governing body makes a satisfactory and improving contribution to school effectiveness. Governors bring valuable skills to their role but several governors are new and therefore in the process of learning about their role.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Hartford Junior School, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 1UL

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. Like you, we think it is a very friendly place to be and you get on well together. Our particular thanks to the choir for singing your song in Afrikaans and those of you who kindly gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to us. We found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share with you my findings.

This is a good school. You told us that you like coming to school and we could see why, particularly when we saw the interesting lessons you have and the good range of clubs, sporting activities, visitors and other opportunities the school provides. You told us that one of the best things in the school is the teachers and that you get on very well with them. Teaching is good and all the adults care about you a great deal and work hard on your behalf. We could see that you are working at about the same level as most other children. You make good progress because teachers keep a close eye on how well you are getting on. Your headteacher and senior teachers provide good leadership. I have asked them to do two things to make your school even better.

- To help you make even better progress in mathematics.
- To check carefully on your work to make sure that you are always making good progress.

This is a good school, not only because of what the adults bring to it but also because of your contributions. You are very positive about learning and we were very impressed with your good manners and thoughtfulness.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector