

Panshanger Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117294
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312560
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Sarah McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Larkins
Headteacher	Mrs Muriel Will
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003
School address	Daniells Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL7 1QY
Telephone number	01707 328 846
Fax number	01707 393 543

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school. Pupils come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, with an increasing number coming from outside the Panshanger estate. A few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are of white British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is close to the national average. The school has gained the Sport England Active Mark, Healthy School's accreditation, the Hertfordshire Gold School Travel Award, the Hertfordshire Quality Standards for Early Years Education and a Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Panshanger is a good school. It is very much at the heart of the local community. Parents are especially appreciative of all the school provides for their children. Indeed, pupils' learning benefits considerably from the exceptionally constructive partnerships that the school has with parents and with others. A comment of one parent reflects the feelings of the vast majority, 'At Panshanger we are all part of the school family.'

The headteacher and her senior management team are not complacent, but always on the look out for ways to make the school better. The school has improved well since the last inspection because of good leadership and management. Since the dip in standards and achievement in 2007, the school team has worked successfully to improve writing standards and increase the number of pupils attaining the higher levels in national tests. This accomplishment points to a good capacity to improve further. The school gives good value for money.

Pupils achieve well and attain above-average standards in English and science. Mathematics standards are in line with national averages. Currently the school's data show that some pupils are not achieving the mathematics levels that they should. However, senior leaders have already deployed different teachers to tackle the underachievement and to raise standards.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers and their assistants organise themselves well to give every pupil good support. Very effective marking ensures that pupils are learning to spot quickly what they need to do to improve their work. The curriculum is good. An extremely exciting variety of activities, outings and clubs enlivens learning and promotes personal and social development very well. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures, but gain an inaccurate perception of the social and economic circumstances of many people in Africa and India.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They have an extremely well developed sense of looking after each other and their environment. They lead exceptionally healthy lives and clearly know how to keep themselves safe. Procedures to care, guide and support the pupils are exemplary. Consequently, they feel totally safe in school and implicitly trust the adults to help them learn.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Members of the Foundation Stage team have very good relationships with parents and children from the start. As one parent commented, 'My child adores his teacher and loves coming to school - a great foundation for his schooling career.' Children start Nursery with expected standards for their age and make good progress. By the end of Reception, children have reached standards broadly in line with those expected nationally. A particular strength is that many children master the basics of reading and forge ahead in their personal development. The very good organisation of indoor and outdoor areas allows children to explore independently and grow in initiative. Reception children are not constrained by too much formal teaching, but benefit greatly from more time than is found in most schools for choosing and organising their own activities. Foundation Stage leadership is knowledgeable about early years' practice, although not all the team are sufficiently clear about national expectations of children at different ages. Foundation Stage staff monitor children's progress accurately and find the right

support for each individual. For example, a child who found it difficult to coordinate his fingers improved because he was encouraged to use scissors to cut out interesting patterns.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards and achievement in mathematics are as good as in English and science.
- Help pupils to learn more about how people in other countries lead their lives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils arrive in Year 1 with standards broadly in line with national expectations. Each year, standards are gradually improving in the tests at the end of Year 2. In 2007, pupils achieved well and reached standards above national averages in reading, mathematics and writing. Statistics for past years show that pupils usually make good progress in Key Stage 2. However, Year 6 pupils who left in 2007 made satisfactory progress. They attained standards which were a little above the national average in mathematics and above in science. Pupils continued to attain high standards in reading, but very few pupils achieved the higher levels in writing. The school did not meet its targets for mathematics or for the higher levels in English. Since then, the school has concentrated successfully on raising standards in writing and on challenging the more able pupils. From lessons observed, work scrutinised and clearly presented data, pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain high standards in English and science, although the school is unlikely to achieve the challenging targets set for mathematics. Pupils who have extra support for learning difficulties and the few who do not have English as their home language also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils arrive at school with a spring in their step. This is not surprising because pupils get on very well with each other and look forward to lots of exciting activities. They flourish through warm, friendly and respectful relationships with the adults in school. Attendance is excellent. Pupils thrive on plenty of exercise and a very good diet. They know how to keep themselves safe when out and about. For example, a good number walk or cycle sensibly to school. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to lessons, which clearly help them to make good strides in their learning. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils have no concerns about bullying and racism. They have an enormous sense of responsibility for their school community. They proudly take on roles, such as school councillors and playground buddies, with impressive maturity. Pupils know that teachers really value their views. They have helped to enhance their environment by running their own juice bar and healthy snack shop to raise funds for a greatly appreciated climbing frame. Above-average standards in basic academic skills combined with exceptional social development prepare them well for their future working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers love their jobs and pupils look forward to their lessons. Very productive cooperation and excellent relationships provide a strong foundation to good learning. Lessons are well organised so that resources are to hand and pupils get down to learning quickly. Teachers use

interactive whiteboards imaginatively to help to explain new concepts. A skilled group of teaching assistants is well deployed, not only to support pupils who find learning difficult but also to challenge the more able. Occasionally, whole class explanations do not cater sufficiently for the wide spread of ability, either because they are too long for pupils with short concentration spans or are already understood by the more able. Teachers monitor and assess the progress of pupils accurately and are quick to try different approaches to help them to catch up or to stretch them more. Very consistent marking is particularly effective because it invariably sets pupils an extra little task to consolidate or challenge their learning. Pupils gain much from checking each other's work. They are starting to take more initiative in seeing if they can perfect their work before seeking help from their teacher.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Many parents are justifiably delighted with the many activities and experiences provided for their children. A very good range of extremely well-attended clubs promotes physical activity and social development well. Pupils learn much about their own local environment and the cultures of others. However, the curricular coverage of Africa and India gives some pupils the inappropriate impression that these two continents are wholly poor. Recent initiatives are proving successful in raising the profile of writing, and there are some excellent examples of expressive writing on display around the school. Subjects other than already well-established English, mathematics and science are being given increasingly more emphasis. Music and art are particularly strong. Very good links between subjects help make learning more interesting and relevant. For example, the pupils thoroughly enjoyed using their knowledge of contours to make their own mountains out of papier mache.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

High-quality care and guidance enable all learners to thrive remarkably well. Teachers and teaching assistants share an exceptional commitment to making every child feel special. One parent wrote, 'There is an ingrained sense of community within the school and, as a result, children spend every day in a happy, secure, safe and intelligent environment.' The pupil-designed anti-bullying leaflet shows that pupils really care for each other. Staff have great expertise in supporting pupils with differing medical conditions and learning difficulties. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are excellent. The school grounds are particularly secure. Academic guidance is very good. Pupils are very clear about what they need to do to improve their learning. If pupils are struggling, teachers find successful ways to put them back on track.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision of their school at the heart of the local community. By setting challenging targets, they strive for high standards, but without detracting from an exciting curriculum. Senior leaders have a generally accurate view of how the school is doing. However, last year's dip in writing standards was not anticipated because data appeared to show that pupils were on track for higher achievement. In response, subject leaders have improved their analysis of data to direct support precisely to where it is needed.

Consequently, aware that too many pupils are not achieving well enough in Year 6 in mathematics, the senior management team is arranging extra support to help them to achieve their targets. Subject leaders account well for the standards in their subjects. They observe teaching and check children's work regularly so that they are able to give helpful advice to their colleagues. The headteacher deploys staff innovatively and effectively to make the most of expertise and to tackle underachievement. For example, the good joint leadership of Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 ensures that Year 1 pupils are not pushed too quickly into formal learning, but can build on essential skills learnt in Reception class at an appropriate pace. Governors keep themselves well informed about standards and achievement so that they can challenge knowledgeably and share in the school's improvement.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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.

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	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

27 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Panshanger Primary School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 1QY

Thank you very much for helping us on the inspection by talking to us and showing us what you can do. We certainly enjoyed meeting you all. Your parents are very pleased that you go to Panshanger Primary School because they believe you learn a lot and are very well looked after. We agree.

You told us that you like coming to school and we are not surprised. Behaviour is excellent and you get on extremely well with your teachers and friends. We are pleased that you lead very healthy and safe lives and appreciate the tasty school food. We are particularly impressed that you run your own 'juice bar' and healthy snacks shop. The new climbing frame, built from your fund raising, is certainly enjoyed by everyone.

Panshanger is a good school that is well led and managed by the headteacher and senior staff. We think you are making good progress and reach good standards, particularly in English and science, because your teachers teach you well. Standards are not so high in mathematics. You have plenty of exciting activities and outings to help you learn. You are very lucky to have so many interesting and active clubs. It is commendable that your teachers encourage you to raise money for people in other countries, but it would help you to know more about the lives of people in Africa and India.

To make your time at school even better, we have asked your teachers to do two things:

- help you to make better progress in mathematics so standards are as high as in English and science
- ensure that you learn more about how people in other countries lead their lives.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We know that your teachers make your school a special place for you. You can do your bit by continuing to be very positive and by making the most of your time at Panshanger Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Mrs McDermott

Lead inspector