

Heathfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102890
Local Authority	Richmond Upon Thames
Inspection number	319397
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Hunt
Headteacher	Mr P Clayton (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2007
School address	Cobbett Road Twickenham TW2 6EN
Telephone number	020 8894 3525
Fax number	020 8893 4073

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Heathfield serves a community that is very diverse, both culturally and economically. Around half of its pupils, higher than is typical nationally, are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A similar proportion has a home language other than English but very few are at the very early stages of acquiring the language. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average as is that of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The school also hosts a small specialist unit for those with speech, language and communication difficulties. Most pupils from the adjacent infant school transfer to Heathfield. The school has experienced much recent turbulence at senior leadership level and is led currently by an acting headteacher.

At its last inspection, in June 2007, the school was issued with a Notice to Improve, as significant improvement was required in standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science. Further areas for development included increasing the proportion of good teaching and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. A monitoring visit in March 2008 found that the school was making satisfactory progress on these issues.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Heathfield is an improving school and now provides a satisfactory quality of education. Thus, in accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, building on the satisfactory progress noted at the mid-year monitoring visit.

For just under two years, significant staffing challenges at senior level hindered the school's focus on raising the pupils' attainment. With the support of the local authority (LA), the present acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed to lead the school until future area plans are clear. This has brought about much needed stability and raised the confidence of staff and parents in senior managers who '...are there for the long-term'. As a result, senior leaders have been able to focus intensively on improving the skills of teachers to help pupils make the progress they should. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there is more good teaching than at the time of the last inspection.

Improvements in classroom practice have contributed successfully to the school's drive to address the previous underachievement in most year groups. Achievement is now satisfactory and standards overall are average in mathematics and science. Work in lessons and the school's regular checks on pupils' progress demonstrate that standards in English have risen to be just below average, but are still lower than in mathematics and science. Writing across the school, particularly that of boys, is not yet good enough. The current progress of the majority of pupils is at least satisfactory. Provisional national test results for this year show that pupils in Year 6 still have not done as well as would be expected in the light of their attainment in Year 2. However, this year their progress has been satisfactory. They have made up ground from previous years to reach just above average standards in science and mathematics and average standards in English.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There is still unevenness in how skilfully subject leaders work to raise standards. Nevertheless, because all staff give full-hearted support to the good leadership of senior leaders, a culture of rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation has developed well. The school now has clear systems to check pupils' progress. However, the quality of feedback to pupils within individual areas of the curriculum is still too variable and does not always help them meet their individual targets.

Heathfield prides itself on being an inclusive school. Pupils report that they feel safe within the school community. Relationships are harmonious and pupils behave well. Their personal development is good. Because of the interesting and improved curriculum, they are growing well in their understanding of the many different traditions in the school and its local community. Pupils enjoy school, attend regularly, participate well in clubs and sport, and value the sound care guidance and support the school provides. Many are proud of the work they do for the school and the wider community. They prepare satisfactorily for their future education and economic well-being because of improvements in their basic skills and through the school's good links with secondary partners. Most parents are supportive of the school and are pleased at the 'visible improvements' since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in writing, particularly for boys.

- Ensure that feedback to pupils on their work in all subjects helps them to make progress towards their targets.
- Develop rapidly the skills of all subject leaders to manage their responsibilities fully.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have risen and are now average at the end of Year 6. In the last year, the pupils' rate of progress, for all groups, has accelerated markedly. The school's records show that Years 3 to 5 have made satisfactory progress from broadly average starting points. Concentrated efforts to address the legacy of underachievement in Year 6, an above average cohort, have been partially successful. In the 2008 national tests, provisional results indicate that pupils reached average standards in English and just above average standards in mathematics and science.

The recent improvements in science and mathematics owe much to the school's focus on developing pupils' investigational skills. Writing, however, is still a weakness across the school. Although there is little difference in the overall achievements of most groups of pupils, boys, particularly those of White British backgrounds, make slower progress in literacy than other groups. The school has now identified a number of ways forward to support this group through providing stimulating practical activities on which to base writing. Those pupils with moderate learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, especially in reading and writing, because of the high levels of individual attention provided.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their social and cultural development is particularly strong. They have a good understanding of religions and traditions other than their own. Pupils enjoy coming to school because 'Teachers are all fair, funny and nice.' Through their school council, pupils have a strong voice in decision-making. For example, members are proud of initiatives such as 'Pupils Help Pupils' to support others in the playground. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. They report that behaviour has improved this year, encouraged by school leaders' successful campaign on the wrongs of prejudice and bullying. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the wider community through various charitable activities and by representation on the local Youth Parliament. Although pupils are aware of how to keep fit and healthy, this does not always translate into healthy lunch boxes. They have a good understanding of keeping safe and are confident that they have an adult in whom they can confide. Pupils' ability to work collaboratively, together with improving standards in essential skills, forms a sound basis on which to build future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

School leaders have a clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching through rigorous monitoring. Teachers create a calm and purposeful working environment and have good relationships with the pupils, promoting very positive attitudes to work. Pupils enjoy learning because lessons are lively and incorporate a good range of engaging activities. For example, in a Year 5 literacy lesson, pupils had exciting opportunities for imaginative descriptions of everyday

gadgets. Teachers plan especially well for pupils to talk about their work and this develops well their self-confidence and thinking skills.

Despite these good features, pupils are not always sure of exactly what is expected from them during some lessons. Although teachers explain what they want pupils to learn, they sometimes phrase this in language that pupils find hard to understand. Marking also is too variable and does not consistently make the next steps in learning clear to pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A particular strength of the good curriculum is the way in which the school recognises the different needs of particular groups of pupils. Talented artists, for example, can extend their skills in special workshops to design and make high quality carnival masks and other artefacts. Visiting authors and visual movie clips encourage a love of reading and writing as the school strives to improve literacy. Across year groups, there are well-planned themed approaches for using and applying mathematics. An increasingly wide range of clubs and other out-of-hours activities enrich learning well. 'Children especially like the trips and workshops.' said a parent, echoing the views of many. There have been many exciting developments in the curriculum this year. However, except in English, pupils have too few opportunities to write at length, despite this being a priority for the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall but pastoral guidance is good. The needs of individuals are considered carefully within the school's supportive and secure environment. Pupils report that problems are managed swiftly and that there is always someone to turn to when the need arises. Good support from external agencies helps pupils and their families cope with needs that are sometimes complex. Speech therapists, counsellors and psychologists work closely with the special needs co-ordinator to work out the best possible programmes for individuals. Liaison with local schools is strong so that support for vulnerable pupils on transition is uninterrupted. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Regular six-weekly checks on progress ensure the school knows how well pupils are achieving. However, in the period between these assessments, not all staff provides consistently useful feedback to pupils on how to reach their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall but some aspects are good. The very positive impact of the acting headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, is evident in the school's shared drive for improvement. Good systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work are embedded more firmly than at the last inspection. As a result, the school's appraisal of its work now provides an accurate identification of areas for improvement, such as boys' writing and the quality of feedback to pupils on their work. A striking feature of current school procedures is the involvement of the governors in evaluating the school's work through such initiatives as the behaviour review. The open and positive response of senior leaders in dealing with review findings has a very good impact on school improvement. Governance is now good.

The appointment of a significant number of new governors has improved their capacity to challenge as well as support the school. The re-structured staff teams work well together. Year leaders increasingly take responsibility for areas of school improvement, including the moderation of pupils' work. Their impact is evident in the improvements in mathematics and science. However, there is still unevenness in the skills with which some subject leaders contribute to the drive to raise standards. The positive changes over the last year show that the school's capacity to improve is now satisfactory.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
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.

Annex A

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

15 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heathfield Junior School, Twickenham, TW2 6EN

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed your company. We were also very pleased to hear how much you enjoyed school and to see how well many of you worked in lessons.

We think you go to an improving and satisfactory school that not only helps you to learn but also looks after you well. We were impressed by how well you get on together.

There are many things that are special about your school. We would like to single out your teachers and helpers who encourage and support you both in lessons, at breaks, and in the interesting excursions and visits. You say grown-ups listen to your ideas and are always willing to help if you have a problem. It is really good that you help each other through your programme of 'Pupils Help Pupils'. You enjoy the opportunities for residential trips to the Isle of Wight and show real interest in the visits to many different places of worship. Most of you know about healthy eating although your packed lunch choices do not always reflect this!

Before we left, we talked to your teachers about how your school could be even better. They told us that they will make sure that you all benefit from the best possible feedback on your work and on how to reach your targets. Teachers will try even harder to ensure that your success in writing matches that in other subjects. We also asked that the school help subject leaders develop even better skills to raise standards further.

We would like to wish you and your school every success for the future and are sure that the vast majority of you will continue to cooperate fully with your teachers. Make sure, too, that you fully understand your targets and follow up on the good advice from many staff.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector