

Flamstead Village School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117100
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338947
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

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 of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Thornton
Date of previous school inspection	4 January 2007
School address	Trowley Hill Road Flamstead St Albans
Telephone number	01582 840385
Fax number	01582 842175
Email address	admin@flamsteadjmi.herts.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with pupils, teachers, members of the governing body and the headteacher. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's plan for improvement, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, minutes of meetings, and safeguarding arrangements. Parents returned 58 questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at:

- How well the pupils are achieving in mathematics
- The effectiveness of teacher-led activities and those chosen by the children, in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- The school's self-evaluation of the impact of its provision on the outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

The school, which mainly serves the village, is much smaller than average. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than in most schools. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is made in the Reception class. The school has received a Healthy School Award and the Activemark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The pupils make sound progress. Their personal development is good as a result of the many opportunities which the school provides for them, and the good care and support that they receive. For many parents and pupils this is a very strong feature of the school's work, and one which they greatly appreciate.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average although it has fluctuated considerably in the last few years. The profile of attainment and pupils' learning and progress is stronger in English than in mathematics. This is because, although satisfactory, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. While purposeful teaching in Years 1 and 2 promotes good progress, in some mathematics lessons in Years 3 to 6 pupils are not moved on and challenged sufficiently to make consistently good progress. The pupils' mathematics work is marked, but they are not routinely given clear guidance about what they need to do to improve or to move on to the next stage in their learning. The pupils' involvement in planning elements of the curriculum adds to their engagement in their learning. It provides many topics to meet the diverse interests and abilities of the pupils. However, there are relatively few opportunities to use and apply their numeracy skills in a range of contexts.

The headteacher and staff have successfully created what one parent, representing the views of many, summarised as 'a wonderful, welcoming environment where my children are very happy and very safe'. Their appreciation of the school begins from the Early Years Foundation Stage where a combination of teacher-led activities and those the children choose themselves ensures a good start to their school lives. The school's current priorities for improvement rightly include raising attainment and improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. However, the monitoring of the school's provision and the evaluation of its impact are not incisive enough to identify which elements of teaching and assessment, and of pupils' learning and progress, need to improve. Consequently, development plans are too broad to enable the school to build rapidly on improvements in national test results in 2009. Currently, governors are not sufficiently involved in the self-evaluation processes. The capacity for sustained improvement is therefore satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, to be consistently good, by:
 - ensuring that tasks accurately meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- providing a wide range of opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills throughout the curriculum
- improving the quality of marking to make it clear to pupils what they have to do to improve.
- Improve the effectiveness of monitoring and self-evaluation by:
 - focusing sharply on the pupils' learning and progress during lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work
 - identifying more specifically where improvement is needed
 - increasing the involvement of governors.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

While the pupils make good progress in some lessons, progress in others is satisfactory. The pupils say they really enjoy lessons. However, in conversation a few say they find some of their work 'easy'. In most lessons the pupils work effectively, concentrate on the tasks they are set and behave well.

In lessons in Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress. The teaching is purposeful and well organised, yet sufficiently flexible to increase the demands that are placed on groups and individuals, so that a good level of challenge is maintained. This was evident in a lesson where Year 2 pupils were successfully developing the use of alliteration in their writing. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 made similarly good progress in a lesson on report writing using 'the third person'. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. In lessons in Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6, too much time was spent consolidating what pupils already knew rather than moving them on to the next stage in their learning and challenging them to tackle more demanding tasks.

The results of national tests over the last few years show that, at the end of Year 2, attainment has improved year-on-year. The most recent results were significantly above the national average. At the end of Year 6, in 2008, results dipped below average and rose again in 2009 to be broadly average in mathematics and above average in English. In the most recent national tests, pupils did particularly well in reading. Overall the pupils made the expected gains between Years 3 and 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making secure progress at the pace expected of them because of the good care and support they receive.

Pupils say they feel very safe in school. They enjoy the many sporting and other extra-curricular opportunities that the school provides which promote their good understanding of staying healthy. Attendance levels are high. The pupils make a good contribution to the community through events that range from picking up litter to performing at musical festivals. The 'Eco Squad' is particularly effective - for example, it has introduced 'walk-to-school Wednesdays'. The curriculum provides pupils with

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

opportunities to learn about a range of faiths, so that in Years 5 and 6 they are able to make comparisons between the festivals and celebrations of different religions. Links with schools in Slovakia and South Africa are providing pupils with an increasingly broad international understanding.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Although the teaching is good in some respects, there are variations and inconsistencies. This results in the pupils making progress in line with expectations, rather than exceeding them. Although mathematics lessons are satisfactory, they lack the attention to detail necessary for accelerating learning and generating consistently good progress. When pupils are questioned at the end of the lesson to determine the extent of their understanding, the results are not always used effectively to ensure that the next lesson builds on what they already know. Consequently, they tend to consolidate rather than extend their skills and knowledge. Inspection of the pupils' mathematics exercise books shows that their skills are not being incrementally developed and extended fast enough. Marking, although conscientious, does not set out what the pupils need to do to

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

improve, and some misunderstandings and inaccuracies identified by the teacher are not corrected.

Pupils make consistently good progress in reading because of the strong foundation in letters and sounds in Years 1 and 2, where the teaching is good. There are also some good features in the teaching of literacy, notably in a lesson in Years 5 and 6, where the skilful questioning by the teacher was used to ascertain the extent of the pupils' understanding and move their learning forward.

The curriculum is well organised, diverse and interesting for the pupils. There are effective links between subjects in order to create coherent learning opportunities for pupils. While there are good opportunities for the pupils to use their literacy and information and communication technology skills in other subjects, using and applying their numeracy skills does not have the same high profile. The school plans many interesting and enjoyable activities that will enhance and extend the curriculum. These are particularly beneficial to pupils' personal development.

The school is particularly effective in creating a welcoming learning environment in which pupils feel safe and well cared for. Arrangements for promoting good behaviour and positive relationships are successful and valued by the pupils. The school's good care and support for pupils is particularly evident in its support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The parents of one child commented that the partnership with them, encouraged by the school, had resulted in their child being happy, confident and secure within the learning environment'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff are keen to make improvements. They work together closely to monitor the quality of teaching and scrutinise the pupils' work. However, many of the records of the monitoring of teaching and the scrutiny of the pupils' work are not sufficiently focused on learning and progress. Although the school plan sets out an appropriate agenda for improvement, it lacks detail as to exactly what must improve and how that improvement is to be achieved.

The governors provide strong support for the school and ensure that their statutory responsibilities are met. However, they approach the issue of holding the school to account with too light a touch. Although they receive information about the school's performance, they are not sufficiently involved in the process of self-evaluation.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The strong partnerships with parents have resulted in a parent council. Established to extend parental involvement in the school and in the pupils' learning, it has just had its inaugural meeting. Partnerships with agencies provide an effective range of additional support for those pupils with specific needs. This, along with the careful tracking of all pupils' progress, illustrates very well the school's commitment in providing equality of opportunity, and to removing barriers to learning faced by individual pupils.

Safeguarding procedures are comprehensive.

The school is at the centre of its community, and the pupils make a good contribution to community life. While multicultural activities extend the pupils' horizons, the national dimension of community cohesion is an area the school is currently looking to extend through links with urban schools.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The good provision for the youngest children has been maintained since the last inspection because the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led. The children's progress is carefully monitored and successfully developed through a wide range of interesting activities. An analysis of the performance of the children in the Reception class last year shows that they made good progress and reached a good level of development. The children who entered school this year and those who joined the Nursery are making a confident start. This is because, in the words of one parent, links with the pre-school lead to 'a very calm and easy transition to the big school'.

The children respond well in teacher-led activities. These activities are effective because

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
 Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

they are well planned and carried out in a manner that draws the children into them. For example, good use of the interactive whiteboard helps the children to recognise the sound for 'y' and to practice writing the letter. Similarly, the range of activities available for children to choose themselves are carefully planned and well supported. Activities flow freely from indoors to out. The adults develop the children's learning well in the outdoor area, for example when the children were using musical instruments to create firework sounds. However, some of the resources are rather worn and do not always promote the most effective learning. The children in the Nursery understand the daily routines. They play and work well together and are happy to pursue their own interests through the activities planned for them. The adults monitor the children's choices carefully, and develop conversations through thoughtful interventions that extend use of language.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents are highly satisfied with the school. Many commented on the atmosphere within the school and how very approachable the headteacher and teachers are should they need to discuss their child's progress. The inspectors agree that the pupils are able to learn in a calm and caring environment.

A few parents raised questions about the consistency of the challenge posed for pupils in Years 3 to 6, and expressed the view that pupils make faster progress up to the end of Year 2 than they do in the following years. The inspectors found that, while teaching and learning and progress are good up to Year 2, there are some inconsistencies in the teaching and progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Flamstead Village School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 101 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	81	10	17	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	95	3	5	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	55	21	36	2	3	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	52	21	36	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	60	21	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	53	23	40	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	74	15	26	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	57	23	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	55	21	36	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	55	21	36	4	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	53	22	38	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	43	74	15	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	67	17	29	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Flamstead Village School, St Albans, AL3 8DL

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your school. You attend a very friendly and caring school which you really like. You behave well. You told me that you enjoy school and feel very safe. Some of you also said that the school provides lots of interesting opportunities, and we agree. A few of you feel that sometimes the work is a little easy. You are given a range of responsibilities which you particularly enjoy, such as running the cybercafe.

The headteacher and teachers are helping you to make satisfactory progress. The teachers have focused on improving your writing, and it has worked. They have plans to improve mathematics. I agree with them that this is an area where they could help you to make faster progress, especially in Years 3 to 6. To help this to happen I have asked them to make sure the tasks they set are at the right level for you, that you have more opportunities to use your numeracy skills in interesting ways, and that when they mark your work they tell you what you need to do to improve.

The headteacher and teachers are constantly looking at how well the school is doing so that improvements can be made. I have asked them to look even more carefully at the quality of your learning and the rate of progress that you are making in lessons and at what can be improved.

I hope that in the future your school is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.