

# Skyswood Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117240
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338975
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth Frith

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	236
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Fiona Harper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Robert Bridle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Chandlers Road St Albans Hertfordshire
<b>Telephone number</b>	01727 854164
<b>Fax number</b>	01727 854164
<b>Email address</b>	admin@skyswood.herts.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	338975

---

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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2009

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons or parts of lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation which included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan and pupils' work. In addition, the responses of 92 parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account.

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

- the achievement of pupils, particularly boys, girls and more capable pupils, to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging
- the effectiveness of recent developments to improve standards in writing and mathematics
- the accuracy of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation with reference to the school's capacity for sustained improvement
- the effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage in relation to provision and children's outcomes.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school with a Nursery which provides part-time places for up to 30 children in each of the morning and afternoon sessions. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion that has special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few speak English as an additional language and hardly any are at the early stages of learning English. This year there have been significant staff changes which have affected, in particular, the Nursery, Reception and senior leadership team.

There is a privately managed after-school club on site and access to a breakfast club run at a nearby school, both of which are inspected separately.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school where pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and do well. The headteacher has been successful in creating a staff team who share his vision and determination to provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities which develop their learning and well-being. Members of the newly established senior leadership team have clear roles and responsibilities and have been particularly effective in ensuring that the new staff in the Nursery and Reception settle well into the school and maintain the good standards seen at the previous inspection. Senior leaders are quickly developing their expertise through working closely together and receiving training. This is helping to drive improvement. Monitoring and self-evaluation are good. The school is aware of what it does well and has a clear programme for improvement. A regular and accurate review of teaching, together with effective support for staff, has helped to maintain good learning and progress. Governors are very supportive of the school and effective in the way they monitor its work and policies. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and clearly understand the challenges it faces. This, together with effective provision and pupils' good progress, ensures the school has good capacity to improve. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils are good and staff manage the school's resources well. Consequently, the school provides good value for money.

Pupils achieve well so that by the time they leave school they reach standards which are above average in English, mathematics and science. Against the national trend, boys in Year 6 last year did better than girls in all subjects, particularly in mathematics where many did better than expected for their age. Recent strategies to improve standards, particularly that of boys in English, have, in part, been effective. However, standards in writing were disappointing with pupils doing less well in the national tests than work in their books indicated. In response to this, the school has adopted different ways of encouraging pupils to write. Insufficient time has passed to see the full impact of this work but early signs are promising. Improvements in Key Stage 1 reflect recent successful work to raise standards in writing and mathematics.

Teaching is good throughout the school because teachers present work which is interesting, and learning usually moves at a good pace. Expectations are generally high and pupils respond well to the challenges set. In a few instances, more capable pupils are not sufficiently challenged. In their marking, teachers do not always make sure that pupils know what to aim for or how to improve their work. Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to the provision of resources for information and communication technology (ICT) and for learning outside in the Nursery and Reception. Teaching in both these areas has improved. Overall, children in the Nursery and Reception do well.

**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

Pupils' personal and social development is never less than good and in some aspects excellent. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and this provides a very good foundation for their learning. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. There is a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere throughout the school and pupils are actively encouraged to respect others through learning about a range of different beliefs, religions and lifestyles. This helps to create a supportive and caring school community. However, staff have no formal way of evaluating the effectiveness of their work to promote community cohesion, particularly beyond the school. Well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils and the exceptionally good relationships evident throughout the school contribute to pupils' good development, well-being and learning. Pupils' individual needs are especially well identified and excellent partnerships with a range of agencies result in pupils feeling very well cared for and supported. In particular, they say staff help them to feel safe, act safely in school and live fit and healthy lives. Pupils are very confident that staff listen to them and take their ideas and concerns seriously. Staff work well with parents and a range of agencies to ensure additional support is given to those that need it so that they, too, progress well. Parents and carers overwhelmingly think that the school keeps their children safe and prepares them well for the future.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure standards in writing continue to improve by firmly embedding the new initiatives and evaluating their effectiveness.
- Ensure pupils have a good understanding of what to aim for and how to improve their learning by:
  - bringing greater consistency to the identification, use and review of challenging targets
  - improving the overall quality of teachers' marking.
- Extend the school's work in promoting community cohesion, particularly beyond the school, and evaluate its impact.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Observations during lessons, an analysis of assessment data and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that pupils make good progress and reach standards above those expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. Following a slight dip in the results of assessments in 2008, Year 2 pupils did much better in 2009, particularly in mathematics with the more capable pupils doing well for their age. This is, in part, due to the provision of more practical mathematics activities and improvements in the way pupils' progress is monitored and evaluated. The school's unvalidated Year 6 national test results in 2009 show similar standards to the previous year in mathematics and science with a particularly high proportion of boys doing well in mathematics. Due to good identification of need and effective support, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those speaking English

**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

as an additional language frequently achieve levels of attainment above those typical of similar pupils nationally.

Pupils like school and this is reflected in their attendance which is above average. They are interested in their lessons and thoroughly enjoy taking part in the wide range of opportunities which the school provides. Pupils say they feel safe at all times and this view is supported by the vast majority of parents and carers. Pupils have a very good understanding of issues such as bullying and say that in the unlikely event that something were to happen, it would be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. They have confidence in the staff and would go to an adult if they have a problem. Pupils feel they are listened to and know their views and ideas are taken seriously, and acted upon when appropriate. The school council is particularly effective in helping to bring about improvements. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and pupils from different groups all work together well to improve the school. The environmental group take great pride in their work in the school grounds and work alongside parents in creating an area in which they grow a good variety of flowers and produce. Activities such as these, together with the many sports activities, help pupils to keep fit and healthy. Pupils develop good personal qualities such as working in groups, taking turns and helping each other which all contribute positively to their future economic well-being.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effectively enhanced through assemblies where pupils come together as a community and celebrate, for example, Harvest Festival. Pupils' moral and social development and the high expectations of staff result in pupils' exemplary behaviour. Pupils' strengths are also reflected in their positive and polite attitudes to others and the harmonious atmosphere in school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Teaching is particularly effective in ensuring that pupils are well motivated and enjoy their learning. Pupils' interest and enjoyment are captured well because teachers plan lessons which are stimulating and usually meet their needs. On a few occasions more capable pupils are not fully challenged so could make better progress. Pupils' learning usually moves at a good rate but now and again, the pace of learning slows when pupils are asked to work on their own or with a partner, as they take time to settle. Teachers make the lesson objectives clear so pupils are aware of what they should learn, and make useful comments to encourage pupils' progress during lessons. Staff use questioning well to develop pupils' thinking and to assess whether they have understood the key points of the lesson. The marking of pupils' work is variable but satisfactory overall. At its best, pupils are aware of what they have done well and how they can improve. In contrast, sometimes pupils do not understand the comments. The expertise of teaching assistants is used effectively to support pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult.

The curriculum is well organised and effective in providing learning opportunities which sustain pupils' interests and ensure their well-being. Significant improvements have been made to the resources for ICT since the last inspection so that pupils have greater access to a wider range of learning opportunities. The interactive whiteboards are used effectively by teachers but more infrequently by pupils to develop their skills and learning. The profile of science has been raised through the school taking part in the pilot scheme for the Science Quality Mark and receiving the Bronze Certificate. Weekly dance lessons for all, together with opportunities to take part in a good range of sports provide pupils with the skills to perform in front of others and take part in competitive matches. All pupils receive specialist music tuition and opportunities exist for them to become members of the school orchestra and take part in the Primary Schools' Music Festival. The school provides a wide range of popular clubs which develop pupils' skills, and visits and visitors successfully enrich the curriculum and capture pupils' interests. The curriculum is also effective in meeting pupils' needs. Activities developed through the St Albans Network for Extended Learning ensure the more capable pupils receive enrichment opportunities. Additional programmes of work for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure that they make good progress.

Effective monitoring of pupils' progress identifies those in danger of falling behind or

**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

who have special educational needs. Effective support is given to ensure that they progress well and develop confidence as learners. The support for more vulnerable pupils, those with challenging behaviour and those with medical and emotional needs is very effective and helps these pupils to attend school regularly and make good progress. Particularly good links with other schools help pupils to meet a wider range of people and prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The new senior leadership team and other leaders and managers are very motivated and committed to bringing about improvement. They are focused on priorities and share a common vision for improvement with all staff, such as the recent introduction of initiatives to improve the teaching of writing and thereby raise standards. They effectively monitor pupils' progress but sometimes targets in the past have lacked clarity and been insufficiently ambitious. However, in line with their increased drive for improvement, targets for the current Year 6 are very challenging, particularly for the more capable pupils. Governors are effective in helping to shape the strategic direction of the school. They show determination in supporting and challenging the school in order to bring about necessary improvements. Staff help parents and carers to support their children's learning by providing them with information about teaching and the curriculum, and by formally asking for their views and opinions through an annual questionnaire. The school is highly committed to working in partnership with others. Excellent partnerships have been developed with a wide range of support agencies which help to ensure the needs of the pupils and their parents and carers are well met. In addition, very good links through the Extended Schools Partnership help to extend opportunities for sport and art. These contribute greatly to pupils' learning and well-being. The school is fully aware of the groups of pupils who may be subject to discrimination, and effective support and promotion of equality of opportunity ensure that they do well in school and frequently better than similar pupils nationally. Staff have a clear understanding of the school's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context but evaluation of its work to promote community cohesion is patchy. Procedures to protect pupils and keep them safe are satisfactory. Staff know which pupils are at risk and give priority to ensuring their welfare.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*



**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

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly because procedures and expectations are clear and staff are very welcoming and supportive. Teaching is good. Children achieve well and make good progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities. By the time they enter Year 1, nearly all reach the levels expected for their age. Significant improvements to the outside learning areas have been made since the last inspection and children in both the Nursery and Reception are eager to experiment with the good range of resources and the good accommodation. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and use this to plan activities which are enjoyable and challenging. Opportunities are provided for children to explore through participating in a good range of adult-led activities or by following their own interests. This helps children to develop skills in learning alone and with others. Relationships are particularly good and children keep themselves and others safe through their good behaviour. Children say they have fun. Effective assessment of the children's learning and interests is used to plan further activities which promote the next small steps in learning. Staff are aware of children's below average skills in communication, language and literacy on entry and take every opportunity to improve these areas. The way children's knowledge, skills and understanding on entry are recorded overall makes it difficult to quickly and easily identify the rate of individual children's progress across all areas. Leadership and management remain focused during this period of transition and new staffing arrangements so that children's learning and welfare continue to be promoted well.

**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

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are supportive of the school and the experiences it provides. Whilst a few raised issues across a range of areas, for example, about taking account of parents' and carers' suggestions and concerns, inspectors found that the school offers similar opportunities to those usually found in primary schools. A few parents and carers thought there were insufficient staff on duty during lunchtime. This was not seen to be the case during the inspection and pupils said there was always an adult there to play with or to go to if they wanted help.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Skyswood Primary 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 92 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	71	25	27	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	68	28	30	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	39	50	54	5	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	39	48	52	5	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	47	51	42	46	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	42	48	52	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	61	66	31	34	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)	48	53	40	44	0	0	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	41	46	50	8	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	39	48	52	4	4	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	40	46	50	7	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	52	57	32	35	5	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	68	22	24	6	7	1	1

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



15 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Skyswood Primary School, St Albans AL4 9RS

You may remember that inspectors recently visited your school to look at lessons and see what you are learning. Thank you for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We agree with you and your parents and think Skyswood Primary is a good school. Here are some of the things we found out.

You work hard and do well so that by the time you leave school you are well prepared to continue learning at secondary school.

Teaching is good and you enjoy learning.

You behave exceptionally well and are kind to each other. We like the way you enjoy working with each other in lessons or, for example, in the school environmental club.

All the adults look after you well so you feel really safe in school and know who to go to if you have a problem.

You understand what you need to do to stay fit and healthy and a good number of you take part in a range of sports activities. Well done!

Even in a good school such as yours, there are things which could be improved. We have spoken with the headteacher, staff and governors and they have agreed to do the following things.

They will help you to improve your writing so please try hard and write as much as you can, both in school and at home.

They will also help you to understand more clearly what to aim for in your work and how to improve your learning.

They will also try to find out how successful the school's work is in helping people to get on well together, both in school and the wider community.

We hope you all keep on working hard and enjoy being at school.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**