

Northgate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117085
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312484
Inspection date	10 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones

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	460
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Hooker
Headteacher	Mrs Deirdre Glasgow
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Cricketfield Lane Bishop's Stortford Hertfordshire CM23 2RL
Telephone number	01279 652 376
Fax number	01279 759 033

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- how effectively the school supports learners to make progress;
- how effectively pupils' involvement in target setting supports learning;
- how well pupils develop the appropriate skills to become responsible members of the community.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school on the outskirts of Bishop's Stortford. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is broadly above expectations. The school has achieved a national award for information and communication technology (ICT) and a Healthy School award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. A significant factor in this is the excellent leadership of the headteacher who, together with the very effective support of staff and governors, leads a determined drive to raise standards and improve provision. One parent expressed a typical view in commenting that her child attends 'an excellent school with excellent staff who work hard to get the best out of all the children'.

Achievement for all pupils is excellent and standards are exceptionally high. The excellent start to learning which children receive in the Foundation Stage is consolidated in Key Stage 1. The standards reached at the end of Year 2, in reading, writing and mathematics, have been significantly above average for the last five years. Standards for the current Year 2 remain well above average. At Key Stage 2, based on the very firm foundations of learning in previous years, the excellent rate of progress continues. Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2007 in English, mathematics and science were significantly above average and this has been the case for the previous four years. The current Year 6 pupils are expected to improve further on these high standards, although the proportion of pupils who attain the higher levels in science is not as high as it could be.

A significant factor in the high achievement is the excellent personal development. Pupils love coming to school because relationships are excellent and learning is fun and challenging. This helps them to develop a positive and confident approach to learning. Attendance is above average, although figures are affected by some families taking holidays during term time. Most pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and are full of life and eager to learn. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have many opportunities to accept responsible roles around the school, for example as playleaders, lunchtime monitors and school councillors. They contribute effectively to the wider community, jointly celebrating local events such as Harvest Festival and pupils regularly organise fundraising events to support local and national charities. Pupils' high levels of basic skills, maturity and confidence prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education.

Teaching is excellent overall. Strong features of teaching include very positive relationships and excellent use of assessment to provide work which is suited to differing abilities. Teaching is regularly inspiring and challenges pupils so that they are eager to learn. Parents frequently refer to the high quality of teaching and the caring nature of the staff. The school makes very good use of support staff to support and extend the learning of pupils who need additional support or those who find learning more difficult. As a result, they make the same very high rate of progress as their peers.

Pupils want to learn because the curriculum is excellent. It is very well adapted to the needs of all abilities and ages and enrichment is especially good. Pupils enjoy the wide provision for extra-curricular activities and the very wide range of visits and visitors are very popular. The school makes very effective use of specialist teachers to provide additional support for a number of subjects. A particular strength of the school is the provision for music. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder by the end of Year 3, and many continue to learn a wide range of instruments throughout Key Stage 2. Music is viewed with great importance and pupils enjoy frequent opportunities to perform musically which contributes effectively to their enjoyment. As one pupil said, echoing the views of others, 'you can't have a school without

music!' The very strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) coupled with very good links with local schools greatly enhance the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The good links with parents and families create a very strong family atmosphere in school. Pupils know that they are very well cared for and known well to staff. This helps to give pupils a real sense of belonging. They feel secure and valued at school. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are in place and the school has appropriate arrangements for safeguarding children. Very effective assessment and tracking systems enable teachers to plan thoroughly, and pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear vision for improvement and strong commitment to raising standards and improving provision. As part of its thorough self-evaluation, all aspects of provision are analysed and developments prioritised. The school improvement plan is clear and comprehensive. Despite the high standards reached, the school is continually and successfully looking to improve further. Governance is excellent. Governors know the school extremely well and are very supportive. Their work is enhanced by the close links each governor has with a group of pupils as they progress through the school. Because of this, governors are very well placed to hold the school to account for its performance. There has been excellent progress since the previous inspection. Exemplary leadership, a shared and cohesive drive to improve and excellent evaluation of performance give the school excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Learning is exceptionally good in the Foundation Stage. Planning is thorough, and provides the children with an excellent range of opportunities to support the development of each individual. Relationships are excellent. The excellent care, support and guidance, and high quality teaching ensure that the children reach high standards and acquire a very wide breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding. By the time they are ready to start Year 1, most children reach levels that exceed those expected nationally. The balance of class-based and intensive group activities is very good. There are frequent opportunities for children to plan what they want to do and develop good quality skills in learning independently. As a result, children enjoy developing a highly confident approach to learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide increased challenge in the science curriculum at all levels, in order to further raise standards

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

11 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northgate Primary School, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 2RL

Thank you for making me so welcome, talking to me and helping me during the school's inspection. It was really enjoyable coming to meet you and finding out all about your school. You will be pleased to know that the school is doing an outstanding job - well done!

Here are some of the most important parts of the inspection report that I thought you might like to know about:

- You work hard in lessons and your achievement as you move through the school is excellent. This helps you to reach high standards.
- Your personal development is outstanding. You clearly enjoy your time in school and I was very impressed by your excellent behaviour.
- You have really good work planned for you and your teachers work hard to make it all as exciting and interesting as possible.
- You told me that your teachers and teaching assistants are doing a great job and learning is lots of fun - I agree with you.
- Your headteacher and governors do a tremendous job of helping everyone work together to make the school as outstanding as it is.

To improve further the school should develop science lessons to make learning even more challenging and stimulating. You can help by continuing to work hard and do your very best.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you.

Ian Jones

Lead inspector