

Northmead Junior School

Grange Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 9ZA

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| Inspection dates: | 5–6 July 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have high expectations of staff and pupils. They share a determination to continue to drive the school forward. Teaching has been improved and, as a result, pupils' standards have risen.
- The strong leadership team has an accurate picture of the school and an effective plan for further growth is being implemented.
- Governors oversee the school's work closely. They provide good support and robust challenge to school leaders.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. They take advantage of training opportunities to develop their own skills and to improve provision in the school.
- A large proportion of pupils in each year are working at the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School leaders have successfully introduced the new national curriculum and assessment arrangements.
- The school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences. They have a good understanding of fundamental British values and are being well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils who attend the speech and language centre benefit greatly from the well-focused teaching they receive. Other pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress to their classmates. Their teachers and teaching assistants provide skilful and well-targeted support.
- Pupils behave well and listen to their teachers and work hard. Pupils feel safe and valued by their teachers.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. Staff are well trained and the safeguarding team are experienced, knowledgeable and vigilant.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Over time, teaching is not challenging enough, particularly for the most able.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to solve problems or develop their reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Expectations for developing pupils' writing in subjects other than English is too variable

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, and in particular the most able, are suitably challenged in their learning so they make accelerated (or outstanding) progress over time
 - making sure that teachers demand the same quality of pupils' writing in all subjects across the curriculum.

- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics further by ensuring that pupils have effective opportunities to tackle problems and to develop their reasoning skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has established an enthusiastic and effective leadership team. Leaders are united in their determination to maintain the momentum in school improvement. Staff morale is high and there is an evident team spirit.
- Together with governors, school leaders have high expectations of teachers and pupils and a determined and effective focus on improving teaching and raising standards. Good progress has been made in the areas for improvement highlighted in the previous inspection report. As a consequence, teaching and outcomes for pupils are good.
- Since the school's previous inspection, the local authority has provided effective support. Regular visits from leadership partners (representatives of the local authority) have sharpened school leaders' evaluation of where further improvements need to be made. They have provided training and challenge to staff. The school is implementing clear, effective plans to continue improving its performance. The authority recognises the school's much-improved performance and its capacity to sustain its improvement.
- Pupils' progress is monitored closely at regular meetings between senior leaders and class teachers. Effective support is planned for any pupils in danger of slipping behind. School leaders have worked with their local infant school to implement a shared and effective assessment scheme. Teachers meet regularly with other schools to assess pupils' work and agree its standard.
- School leaders check teachers' performance rigorously and set targets for improvement based on a good range of evidence of their work. Teachers are paired in such a way that more experienced teachers can influence the practice of others. Training is matched closely to teachers' targets for improvement and their own aspirations.
- The school develops many of its own leaders. Teachers are committed to honing their skills and life-long learning. They spoke highly of the training opportunities available to them and the expectation that they would share their developing expertise with others and raise the overall quality of teaching in the school. Teachers readily take on extra responsibilities, such as organising the school council, developing the library and enriching the curriculum.
- The speech and language resource base is well led and managed. Teaching is skilful, highly focused on the needs of individuals and engages pupils closely. Concepts are taught precisely and persistently until they are fully understood. As a consequence, pupils who attend the speech and language and communication centre work hard and make good progress in developing the necessary skills and understanding.
- Teachers' specialist teaching skills in the speech, language and communication centre have been shared across the school and teaching assistants have had training in a number of areas. As a consequence, the school provides a good range of specialised support for pupils.
- A broad and balanced range of subjects is offered at the school, with a suitable emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Topics combine elements of several subjects, mainly history and geography, in an exciting and engaging manner; for example, Year 5 pupils study their own local town and its development. A good range of visits, visitors and themed days, such as for science and citizenship, enrich pupils' experiences well.
- Music, art and sport feature prominently. Bright, well-organised displays around the school, including ceramic face masks and interactive models, illustrate pupils' developing confidence and competence in art and design and technology. Links with the local secondary school, opportunities to learn how to play an instrument and a wide range of sports activities have greatly improved pupils' experience of music and sport.
- The school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and includes an emphasis on fundamental British values. For example, pupils prepared cogent arguments for leaving or remaining in Europe. They reflect on and respond to a weekly question posed in assembly, for example on rights and responsibilities. They are being well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The school is fully inclusive. Staff ensure that opportunities are open to all pupils. For example, the pupil premium funds are used to make sure disadvantaged pupils have the full range of school experiences. Leaders ensure that support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective.
- Sports funding is well targeted to help pupils become more physically active. Sports coaches provide a

wide range of different activities and coaching in specific sporting skills for pupils and teachers. An all-weather pitch, more equipment and sports clubs and competitions have ensured that more pupils are regularly involved in sport.

- School leaders do not have the same high expectations of pupils' writing in other subjects as they do in English.
- Nearly all parents spoken to expressed positive views of the school and how happy their children were. They commented on the approachability of staff, the value of the workshops for parents to learn about the curriculum and the good progress their children were making. A small minority of the comments received online were more critical, notably of communication by the school and pupils' behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence to support the expressed concerns over behaviour.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The well-organised governing body is fully aware of its responsibilities and is diligent in carrying them out. Governors have a wide range of relevant skills and augment them further through regular training. Governors have been closely involved in determining the strategic direction of the school, encompassed in its three-year plan, and individual governors monitor different areas of the school's work.
 - Governors know the school's strengths and the areas it needs to improve. They have regular reports from school leaders and make their own visits to see improvements for themselves. They are truly critical friends of the school, offering strong support but also asking probing questions of school leaders, for example about pupils' progress or the impact of sports fund spending.
 - The governing body manages finances prudently and is forward-thinking, anticipating the impact of future staffing costs. Governors ensure that extra funding is spent effectively, for example, they make sure the pupil premium is spent for the benefit of eligible pupils. They oversee the appraisal of teachers, ensuring that pay awards are justified.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff and governors have received appropriate training, including in the 'Prevent' duty. There are regular updates on safeguarding concerns, with due regard to confidentiality. The team responsible for child protection are experienced, knowledgeable, passionate and vigilant. They are tenacious in following up concerns and monitoring any potentially vulnerable children. Records are well maintained and stored securely. Designated safeguarding leaders ensure that the handover of records to destination schools when pupils leave is well managed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Senior leaders' relentless focus on improving teaching, including raising teachers' and pupils' expectations, since the previous inspection has been effective. Underperformance in teaching is challenged promptly and there are successful strategies to share best practice across the school. Links with the local secondary school have been exploited to develop expertise in several areas including information technology and music.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have established strong, trusting relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils feel listened to and valued, confidently ask questions and know that teachers will help them if they get stuck. Groups are well managed and settle to work promptly.
- Generally, teachers plan activities that interest and engage pupils. Year 5 pupils enjoyed using a new software programme to develop their own computer game and developed their computer skills.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the new national curriculum are secure. They provide clear explanations and model the correct technical vocabulary. They take every opportunity to extend pupils' own vocabulary, such as in a Year 4 science activity about classification, where the teacher's skilful questioning elicited the correct terminology for different groups and characteristics of invertebrates.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and know what is expected of them. They liaise closely with class teachers so that the support they provide for individual pupils is well targeted and effective. For example, teaching assistants trained in teaching phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) provide effective support to pupils who are not yet fluent in reading.
- Pupils' written work is marked regularly and teachers consistently follow the school's marking guidelines. Teachers provide clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work and often include probing questions to improve pupils' understanding further. Pupils reported that they had regular opportunities to respond to teachers' advice and that it helped them to 'understand things better'.

- Over time, teaching is not challenging enough, particularly for the most able. Consequently, pupils are not yet making outstanding progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to their learning. They respond quickly to teachers' instructions and settle down to work promptly. Generally, pupils work hard. Written work is usually well presented and exercises are completed. Some pupils pointed to the school motto, 'Try more, learn more, achieve more,' to describe their approach to work at school.
- Pupils are self-assured. Most have a wide vocabulary and speak clearly and confidently: they are used to being listened to. During class or group discussions they listen respectfully to others. They are proud of their school and of their achievements.
- Pupils take pride in shouldering extra responsibilities, for example as house captains, library monitors and eco-warriors. Sports leaders often organise games and Year 6 'buddies' help new Year 3 pupils to settle in. The active school council has brought about changes in the school in response to pupils' suggestions, such as extra books and more equipment for playtime activities.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. They can explain why regular exercise and a balanced diet are important. They said that they regularly take part in sporting activities, including the daily one-mile run with the rest of their classmates for the 'Run to Rio' project.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and have an adult to turn to if they are ever upset. They mentioned the 'worry box' where they can share their concerns. They know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, such as when crossing the road or using the internet. Year 6 pupils remembered clearly a safety event at a fire station where they learned, among other things, about safety at sea and 'stranger danger'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils know the school rules and think they are applied fairly. Most pupils show exemplary conduct as they move around the school. They are polite to one another and visitors alike and often offer friendly greetings as they pass.
- At playtime, pupils generally interact sociably and with consideration for one another. At lunchtimes, pupils queue sensibly for their meals, are well mannered when they eat and tidy up after themselves.
- From what pupils said and from the responses pupils made to the online questionnaire, pupils do not see bullying as a problem at school. Pupils know what bullying is, including cyber bullying. They know what to do if they see or experience bullying. They have great confidence that teachers would sort out any bullying incidents quickly and fairly.
- Pupils enjoy school and engage in their learning well. They have good relationships with their teachers and other adults and think that lessons are usually fun. Attendance is currently in line with the national average overall. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils is improving because of the rigorous systems that are now in place. Pupils who attend the breakfast club enjoy the opportunity to socialise with friends and play educational games. As well as providing a nourishing breakfast and helping working parents, the facility supports pupils' high attendance rates.
- School logs show that all forms of misbehaviour and consequent actions by the school are recorded and analysed carefully. There have been few incidents of more serious misbehaviour, including bullying. The school's response to incidents has been well matched to each situation and effective. In addition, the school copes well with the few pupils who have specific behavioural needs and difficulty in managing their own behaviour.
- Behaviour in class is generally good. Pupils are usually attentive and stick to the tasks planned for them. Occasionally, when teaching does not engage or challenge effectively enough, pupils can lose interest and come off task.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- From school performance records and confirmed by the work seen in their books, pupils currently in the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school took effective steps to make sure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding at the time of the changeover to the new national curriculum were rapidly filled. By careful planning to match activities to pupils' learning needs, teachers have enabled a greater proportion of pupils to make rapid progress over time. As the school year ends, a large proportion of pupils in every year are working at age-related expectations in English and mathematics.
- In 2015, in contrast, Year 6 pupils' progress in reading and writing was below average. Their attainment by the end of key stage 2, although average in mathematics, was below average in reading. A smaller proportion than nationally attained the higher levels in writing and spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Disadvantaged pupils of all abilities make similar progress in their learning to others. Extra support, provided by well-trained teaching assistants, is closely matched to their learning needs. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others is closing. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, who initially lack good enough English speaking skills, rapidly develop their fluency so that it is not a barrier to them achieving well. They achieve as well as their classmates.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by skilled teaching assistants and good planning by teachers to meet their needs. They make similar progress to their classmates in English and mathematics. For example, their handwriting and the way they structure sentences has improved, as has their vocabulary. They show increasing fluency in mathematics. Pupils in the speech, language and communication centre make particularly strong progress from their starting points due to the precise match of teaching to each pupil's needs.
- Pupils' fluency in mathematics is improving well. They have many opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills in mathematical operations and to use mathematical vocabulary. The use of concrete objects and practical tasks is effective in helping pupils to develop their understanding. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their reasoning skills or to solve problems.
- Reading has a high profile at school. Pupils spoke animatedly about the new library space, which they use regularly. Pupils read to an adult each week in school and their reading records show that they read regularly at home. Book clubs in each year group enable pupils to discuss different books. Weaker readers are supported well to quickly improve their reading age through short, well-targeted interventions.
- The most able pupils make similar progress to their classmates and attain well. As well as specially planned activities for them in class, they are further stretched through challenging events, such as master classes at a nearby grammar school and the newspaper club, which produces a termly newspaper for the school.
- Pupils are improving the coherence, quality and presentation of their writing. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and to write in a number of genres. However, teachers do not demand the same quality of writing in other subjects and the level of challenge in activities is not high enough for the most able.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 125294 |
| Local authority | Surrey |
| Inspection number | 10012233 |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 358 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Trevor Grant |
| Headteacher | Debbie Brown |
| Telephone number | 01483 529870 |
| Website | www.northmead.surrey.sch.uk |
| Email address | contactus@northmead.surrey.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27–28 March 2014 |

Information about this school

- The school is larger than an average junior school. There are four classes in Year 3 and three classes in each of Years 4 to 6.
- A specially resourced unit for speech, language and communication, called the Communication and Interaction or COIN centre, is on site. Currently, it provides support for 12 pupils.
- Most pupils are White British and the remainder come from a wide range of ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors, accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher on occasions, observed pupils in all year groups engaged in a range of activities in different subjects. They looked at pupils' written work in all years and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders, the chair of the governing body and three other governors. An inspector spoke to two representatives of the local authority, one by telephone.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils and, informally, with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to pupils in Year 3 reading and spoke to them about their reading habits.
- Inspectors examined several school documents. These included the school's evaluation of its performance and its development plan, notes of governors' meetings, information about pupils' progress and attainment, evidence about the quality of teaching, and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the views expressed informally by parents as they arrived at school and 40 responses to the online questionnaire for staff.
- There was some disruption to the school's normal timetable on the first day of the inspection due to a national teachers' strike; five classes and their teachers were not present on this day.

Inspection team

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| Jim McVeigh, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Christopher Crouch | Ofsted Inspector |
| Christine Bulmer | Ofsted Inspector |

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