

Fairhouse Community Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114905
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	378954
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2012
Lead inspector	Geof Timms

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Cox
Headteacher	Glenys Jones
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2009
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

Geof Timms

Additional inspector

Alastair McMeckan

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Sixteen lessons were observed, taught by seven teachers and one higher level teaching assistant, for a total of seven and a half hours. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of policies, planning documents and the school's self-evaluation. Thirty-eight questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than the average-sized infant school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The vast majority of pupils are White British but there are a few pupils from a range of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The main needs are speech, language and communication difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. The school has achieved Healthy Schools and Investors in People status and has an Inclusion Quality Mark and a Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Most children start school with skills below the levels expected nationally, particularly in English. All make good progress throughout the school, especially in mathematics and reading. Attainment in mathematics and reading is broadly average by the end of Year 2, but pupils' speaking and writing skills are below average.
- Pupils' good progress is due to typically good teaching and strong relationships between adults and pupils. Both factors help children to settle quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and to develop into effective learners by the time they leave school. Where the teaching is less consistent, teachers' questioning does not promote enough independent thinking and they do not fully challenge the most-able pupils.
- Good leadership ensures that slow progress is identified quickly and good plans address any underachievement by individuals or groups of pupils. Members of the governing body have improved their understanding of assessment data and they are more effective at holding the school to account.
- A variety of data and other information about learning are analysed in depth by senior and middle leaders. As a result, an effective range of interventions help pupils who are finding learning difficult, especially those with special educational needs.
- The school provides excellent pastoral care for pupils and families. This provision has a very positive impact on the pupils' ability to attend regularly, learn, work and play in a safe and effective environment. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is generally good and any incidents of misbehaviour are very effectively dealt with, although a small minority of parents and carers have concerns about some pupils' behaviour. The vast majority of parents and carers are largely positive, especially about the quality of teaching and learning, and how well their children are kept safe.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve pupils' skills in speaking and writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills
 - giving pupils more time for writing at length in different subjects
 - embed and track the effectiveness of recent improvements to the teaching of writing.
- Ensure teachers always provide activities and tasks that fully challenge the most-able pupils so they make enhanced progress, are able to develop good thinking skills and achieve higher levels.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The pupils' achievement in lessons observed during the inspection, and reflected in the examples of their work scrutinised, was good. Although they usually start school with skills below those typically expected, most children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They improve their personal, social and emotional skills and get better at linking letters and sounds. This helps them develop sound reading skills and talking to children shows how positive they are about reading and how much they enjoy books. Children often start school with a better ability to recognise and use numbers than in other areas of learning. This foundation is well built on during the Reception Year and standards are often higher than they are for other areas of learning.

In Key Stage 1 progress is good, especially in mathematics and reading. Pupils have a good ability to read unfamiliar words and clearly enjoy reading. Mathematics achievement is good because lessons are active and interesting. For example, in Year 2, pupils were using ingredients to make trifle and each group had a list of the costs of ingredients that they had to match to coins and total to find out the cost of their trifle. This learning did not fully support the most able, however, as the amounts were too low, although appropriate for the lower and middle attainers.

Pupils' speaking skills are less well developed. They often start school with low skills in this area. This has a negative impact on their writing, because their vocabulary is not well developed. Consequently, writing attainment is below average and progress slower than in other areas. The school has introduced changes to the curriculum to promote better writing and speaking. These have not had time to become fully embedded and evaluated for impact.

There are no significant variations in the achievement of different groups of pupils – whatever their social background or ethnic heritage. The school works hard and successfully to ensure any persistent absentees make progress close to that of their peers when they return to school. Disabled pupils and those with special educational

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needs and/or disabilities make good progress in line with their peers due to the very well organised and successful provision they receive. Support is largely within the classrooms rather than in groups taken out, ensuring all have proper access to the full curriculum. Parents and carers are rightly positive about their children's learning, and pupils themselves say that the school helps them learn new things.

Quality of teaching

Pupils say teachers help them learn and that, 'We always try to do our best.' The overwhelming majority of parents and carers say the quality of teaching at the school is good. As one parent wrote 'I would just like to add that I think this school is lovely - as well as the staff being professional they are also very friendly & approachable.' Inspectors also judged it to be good overall, and it has a positive impact on pupils' good achievement. The range of activities teachers provide support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A lot of work promotes pupils' sense of wonder. Year 2 were impressed with the moon landings as they learned about the 1960s as part of the school's birthday celebrations. A good range of artistic and musical activities are provided and Reception children have made some excellent and very scary monster models as part of their work on '*The Gruffalo*'.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Their subject knowledge is good and reflects high levels of preparation for lessons, supported by a strong curriculum framework. Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure children settle quickly and confidently into school routines. Activities indoors and outside, although affected during the inspection by snow, provide an appropriate mix of adult-led and child-initiated learning. Links between subjects are made well and the making of snowmen was cleverly combined with mathematical activities.

Where the teaching is most effective, planning is clear and involves the other adults well to provide support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This support is very effectively done within classrooms rather than in outside intervention groups. This practice works well and enables all pupils to take a full part in lessons. The support, often on a one-to-one basis, is effective and has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy challenging activities, especially practical work. At times, planning does not provide sufficient challenge for more-able pupils and extra activities or enrichment work are often provided only when pupils have completed the same work as the rest of the class – and which, for able pupils, may be unnecessary. Very occasionally, the questions teachers ask do not give enough opportunities for developing thinking skills.

The teaching of reading is effective in holding pupils' attention and helping them enjoy a range of texts. Teachers' skills in teaching pupils to link letters and sounds are good. A good range of assessment information is available to teachers. A good system for termly tracking highlights the progress pupils make and identifies any who may be underachieving. On their return to school, absentees are very well supported and are able to resume a good rate of progress.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and this is typical over time. They are polite, friendly and respectful towards visitors. Their good behaviour in lessons helps their learning and they enjoy challenges. One of the pupils spoken to said, 'We are caring and sharing to each other.' In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the good focus on routines, and on children's personal, social and emotional development, helps develop good learning skills and attitudes in children ready for their future education. The school is a very harmonious society. This was shown even when events out of the ordinary take place, such as birthday celebrations, snow and inspection! The school has worked very hard and done all possible to improve attendance. It has risen considerably, but remains below average. External agencies are used to support and challenge individual families over pupils' attendance. The deployment of a pastoral-support manager has had an excellent impact on a number of pupils and families facing very challenging circumstances, and attendance has improved. Parents and carers have expressed their gratitude for the help and support provided and the school has benefited from more settled, regularly attending pupils whose learning has improved.

The school keeps good records regarding behaviour. Pupils say bullying of any kind is rare, and that it is dealt with very effectively when it does occur. They happily talk about the confidence they have in adults to deal with such issues. Exclusions are rare but used appropriately and systems are correctly followed and recorded when required. Firm efforts are made to ensure all pupils are safe and able to learn effectively. All parents and carers say their children feel safe at school, and this is supported by pupils' responses to questions and actions around the school.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good and this view is shared by the parents and carers. The headteacher has built a good team of staff who share her vision and ambition for the school. Although progress is good, the leaders plan carefully to improve this further and continue to raise standards. Although yet to be fully embedded, improvements in both provision and outcomes are clearly evident in the progress seen in pupils' writing skills.

There are effective systems for staff training and development. These have ensured that newcomers have settled in quickly and are improving their practice and gaining expertise. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas requiring development. Priorities, such as the raising of standards in writing have been analysed, planned for and effective actions put in place. Both Year 2 classes have a high proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They have been provided with improved support staffing so that more individual- and small-group attention can be given to those pupils. This provision is having a positive impact on their progress. The deployment of a pastoral-support manager has an excellent impact on the ability of some families to access support to help their children learn at school.

Analysis of assessment data is detailed, highlights any potential underachievement

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and leads to effective remedial action. The leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is very effective and the school works hard to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals and groups of pupils; there is no discrimination.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets pupils' needs well, including the promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good provision for cultural and spiritual development celebrates diversity in faiths and cultures through a range of artistic and musical experiences. Strong leadership has tackled the difficult and sensitive task of improving attendance with individual families, and marked improvement has been achieved. This further reflects the school's commitment to equal opportunity – working closely to gain the confidence of parents and carers to emphasise the importance of full attendance, and getting positive results. Successful action such as that over attendance, pupils' good achievement and effective teaching show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

The governing body has improved its understanding of the school's performance. Governors recognise its strengths and are well aware of improvements since the last inspection. Although it is difficult to find and retain governors for any length of time, they are kept well informed by the headteacher's perceptive reports. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



8 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fairhouse Community Infant School, Basildon, SS14 1QP

Thank you for the way you welcomed the inspectors to your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit, watching you learn and talking with many of you about your school. We especially enjoyed seeing you enjoying the birthday activities and taking part in the Generation Game.

Fairhouse is a good school. We spoke to a lot of you who were very positive about school. One of you wrote that, 'We have lots of friends and we love them lots.' That is what we saw while we were visiting because you were all working and playing so well together. You were learning lots of new things, especially about the history of the school.

You learn well in mathematics and you are growing into very good readers. We heard some of you read and talked with some of you about the books you enjoyed. Many of you find writing harder and some of you told us you do not like writing. We have asked the school to help you get better at writing by helping you learn and use lots of new words when you are speaking, and then to do more writing in different subjects. Most of you, right from the youngest children in Reception, make good progress. We have asked the teachers to make sure that those of you who find learning a bit easier are given more activities that challenge you and make you think.

The headteacher, governing body and senior teachers provide good leadership. Your teachers work very hard to give you good and interesting lessons. You help by behaving well and having positive attitudes towards your work. Try and make sure you keep attending regularly. Thank you again for your friendliness and help. We hope you continue to enjoy your time at Fairhouse and keep working hard.

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms
Lead inspector

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