

Perryfields Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114924
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	378962
Inspection dates	23–24 February 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nikki Evans
Headteacher	June Gould
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2007
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional inspector

Janet Tomkins

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over eight hours was spent observing parts of 15 lessons taught by seven members of staff, holding discussions with pupils about their learning and hearing pupils read. Inspectors held meetings with staff 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 scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and case studies of specific pupils. They also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspection team analysed 100 responses to the questionnaire returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds in this smaller than average sized-school. Few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is low. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. Most of the six classes are taught by teachers appointed to the school in September 2011. The school has recently received the Activemark award and has been reaccredited with Healthy Schools status.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It has outstanding features in the rich and interesting curriculum, the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their exemplary behaviour, and the strong partnership between home and school. It is not outstanding because teachers do not always challenge the more-able pupils in mathematics and subject leaders are not consistently contributing effectively to driving forward improvement in their areas.
- Achievement is good. Pupils develop a great enjoyment for reading and use their basic understanding of the sounds letters make to tackle unfamiliar words and improve their spelling. Their writing develops well because teachers provide many interesting opportunities to practise their skills. Attainment in mathematics has risen since the last inspection to above average and in line with reading and writing. The school has identified that not all pupils reach the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Good and improving teaching across the school is a major factor in the pupils' good progress. Lessons are carefully planned and topic themes link learning creatively between subjects. Pupils become involved in shaping aspects of their learning by suggesting what they might want to learn at the start of each topic.
- Pupils say that adults look after them and treat them kindly and so they feel very safe at all times. They concentrate for long periods and are not daunted if tasks are hard. Their social development is particularly strong and they collaborate very effectively, particularly when discussing their ideas with others.
- The headteacher's determined leadership has quickly moulded new teachers into a cohesive team working towards common goals. In leading the drive to improve teaching by monitoring the work of teachers and supporting their improvement, she has brought consistency in their approach to learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rigorously implement plans to increase the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in mathematics by:

- ensuring that teachers provide a consistent level of challenge for the more-able
 - providing problem-solving exercises and investigations that fully extend their thinking.
- Introduce a programme to develop the role and leadership skills of new subject leaders so that they can evaluate achievement, plan and implement action to improve teaching in their areas.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers strongly agree that their children make good progress, and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. Parents' views were encapsulated by one who wrote, 'Our child is making fantastic progress. We are very pleased with what our child can do at such a young age.' Attainment is above average by the end of Year 2 in all subjects. There are no patterns to any variations in the achievement of boys and girls and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress.

Pupils learn new skills quickly and benefit considerably from practising and extending these in their topic work. Pupils develop their writing well in a wide range of interesting contexts, often linked closely to their topic theme or to stories they are studying. This stimulates their imaginations. Careful presentation and neat handwriting is expected at all times so that several pupils in Year 2 are already writing in a neat cursive script. They become absorbed in their writing for long periods such as when Year 1 pupils retold the 'Owl Babies' story. A Year 2 lesson on composing persuasive texts typified much of the good learning seen during the inspection. The pupils were thoughtful and imaginative as they sought to 'sell' a property to a book character. Learning was purposeful as the task grabbed their attention. Constructive peer-assessment reflected their ability to work collaboratively.

Children make good progress in Reception from skills slightly below those expected for their age on entry. They thrive in an interesting environment and are quickly able to plan their learning and explore their own lines of enquiry. They rapidly learn the sounds letters make and apply this when reading simple books. This good progress in reading continues across the school and attainment is above average by the end of Year 2. More pupils than previously are reaching higher levels and pupils show a great interest and enjoyment in books through reading the work of a new author each term.

The gap identified at the last inspection between the pupils' slightly lower attainment in mathematics compared with reading and writing has closed. Action taken such as training staff to enhance their teaching skills, using examples of good practice and introducing individual programmes for pupils low in confidence mathematically have met with success. However, the more-able can at times undertake repetitive exercises of skills already mastered and their thinking is not consistently extended.

Quality of teaching

Parents are in strong agreement that teaching is good and the needs of their children are met well. The teacher in a lower ability Year 2 mathematics lesson demonstrated many of the qualities seen in lessons throughout the school. Careful planning gave learning a clear structure and the teacher questioned the pupils with skill, requiring them to explain their thinking at all times. This lesson on drawing bar charts challenged all pupils with carefully pitched activities that moved forward briskly. Teachers promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well by encouraging them to work together, use their imaginations and reflect on aspects of the texts they are reading.

Teaching in Reception and the activities provided for the children are based on a sharp understanding of their needs and interests. Learning flows smoothly between activities inside and the outdoor classroom. An outstanding session introducing the concept of symmetry linked an adult-led practical activity with a wide range of engaging activities outside to enable the children to explore and cement their understanding. Speaking is constantly promoted and adults probe with skill through their questions to move learning forward. Sessions led by adults exploring letters and sounds are brisk and pitched carefully at the next steps in each child's learning.

Teachers use their continual assessment to adapt the planned curriculum carefully so that the interests and abilities of pupils are closely met. More-able pupils are generally challenged effectively, although not always through problem-solving and other activities in mathematics. Careful assessment enables effective support in class or in small groups to focus sharply on the specific learning needs of the small number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Pupils understand the steps they need to take to meet their personal goals through regular marking and constructive feedback from all adults. They regularly use their personal targets, an assessment of each other's work and support from classroom displays to improve the quality of their writing.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers are overwhelming in their view that pupils behave well and that the school manages any incidents constructively. The strong and welcoming ethos is based on shared values and high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. Pupils report that all members of staff are consistent and fair in their implementation of systems. Pupils respond quickly and without fuss to their teachers, know how to behave and adhere to the rules and values they have helped to shape. Evidence supports the view that the excellent behaviour seen during the inspection is typical for the school.

Concentration and attention levels are very good from Reception children upwards. Pupils persevere with tasks they are given, work with much enthusiasm and interest and take great pride in their successes. Their collaboration with each other, whether working on tasks, discussing ideas or assessing each others' work, is highly constructive. This contributes significantly to their learning and the calm atmosphere in each classroom. Lessons flow smoothly and pupils say they are very rarely interrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Attendance has risen in recent years and is

now at a high level.

Parents and carers strongly agree with the views of their children about how safe they feel in school. The pupils show great care and consideration towards each other. They move around the school sensibly and understand how to play safely and not to put others at risk of being hurt. They are very kind to each other and look after each other if they are upset or feeling left out. Parental views are overwhelming and reflect those of their children that bullying is simply not an issue for them.

Leadership and management

Parents and carers are in strong agreement that the school is well led and managed. The headteacher's clear vision has enabled the new team to come together sharing a common purpose and so become effective quickly. This is because of the continual focus on driving up the quality of teaching. Teachers are set clearly defined targets for improvement based on rigorous monitoring of their performance. Targeted training is then provided including the opportunity to work alongside or observe experts in the school or in other settings. Teachers work to a common lesson planning system and marking protocols, and have embraced the topic theme approach wholeheartedly.

The headteacher's drive and determination have enabled the pupils' good achievement to be maintained and improvements over time to continue. The governing body has supported the school effectively through its recent changes, while still challenging the headteacher to account for the achievement of the pupils. These features underpin the school's good capacity for further improvement. Subject leadership has undergone several changes and not all have developed the expertise and skills to fulfil their role in driving forward improvement in their areas.

The headteacher's emphasis on promoting equality and tackling discrimination ensures that the school is a harmonious and tolerant community. She has sharply focused staff on individual pupils who might be in danger of falling behind their targets to ensure implementation of the actions required to improve their achievement. Governors have established clear policies to protect and safeguard the welfare of pupils and staff, and ensure that these are implemented effectively.

The curriculum is outstanding and provides a wide range of exciting experiences that contribute considerably to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Linking learning through topic themes such as 'Build it up' and 'Food, glorious food' fires their imaginations. Parents are very pleased with the partnership between home and school. Regular consultation enables the headteacher and governors to identify and take account of their concerns. Workshops focusing on reading and mathematics have been received well and enable parents and carers to support their children better at home.

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.



27 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Perryfields Infant School, Chelmsford, CM1 7PP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We saw that you work very hard and inspectors were impressed by your confident answers to their questions. We can see from the work on display and in your books how much you enjoy the topics you study each term.

We found that Perryfields Infant is a good school. These are the things we liked most.

- As you told us, the headteacher, staff and governors do their utmost to help you all to succeed, to take care of you and make sure you are kept safe.
- You want to learn and behave very well; this helps to make the school calm and happy.
- We agree with you that you are taught well. Teachers make lessons interesting and help you to make good progress.
- Your writing improves rapidly because you are given opportunities to develop your skills in a wide range of interesting ways.
- You enjoy learning to read and we were impressed by the way you can talk about your favourite authors.
- Those of you who find learning difficult are given effective help so that you make the same good progress as others in your classes.

We have asked the school to improve learning further in mathematics by ensuring that teachers ask more of those of you who are capable of reaching higher levels. We have also asked that subject leaders are trained so they can make a greater contribution to improving your learning. You can all play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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