

King's Ford Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114717
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357593
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Canning
Headteacher	Linda Rowley
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom visited the school for half a day specifically to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures. The lead inspector observed six teachers when visiting eight lessons, and also observed the extra help given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inspectors held meetings with some of the teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, and pupils, and looked at a range of information, including data showing the progress made by pupils and samples of pupils' work. Questionnaires returned by 34 parents and carers and 19 members of staff were analysed.

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

- To what extent is the school able to demonstrate that pupils make satisfactory progress despite continued weakness in reading?
- How effective has the school been in responding to the previous inspection findings by ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, assess pupils' attainment accurately and provide work that matches their needs?
- How well can the school demonstrate the impact of leaders at all levels, particularly governors, in raising attainment and improving rates of pupils' progress?

Information about the school

This infant and nursery school is much smaller than most primary schools. It shares a site with King's Ford Junior School on the outskirts of Colchester in an area which comprises largely military and social housing. About a third of the pupils come from army families and, together with the transient nature of some other families, this leads to a much higher than normal turnover of pupils. A very large majority of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. Most of these pupils have general learning difficulties, including speech, language and communication and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery, with 52 places, which children attend on a part-time basis, and a Reception class. There are also a few Reception age children in a Year 1/Reception class. Children transfer from Nursery to Reception in either September or January; consequently, the number of Reception classes increases during the course of the school year. At the time of inspection, pupils were taught in five classes.

Recent changes in staffing mean that teachers responsible for mathematics and special educational needs are newly in post, and there is a new deputy headteacher. There has been high mobility within the governing body. At the time of the inspection, there was a full complement of governors for the first time for a number of years. The school has Healthy School status and the Activemark accreditation for its promotion of physical education and sport.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Its most significant strength is the outstanding care, guidance and support provided for pupils.

The school invests a great deal of time and resources in helping pupils to make excellent progress in developing good personal and social skills, thus providing a climate within which learning can take place. Behaviour is good, and most pupils work well with their classmates. All pupils say they are well cared for, and feel secure in the knowledge that adults will always help them if needed. Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep safe, and show a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The well-planned curriculum, based around exciting themes, helps teachers to provide their pupils with lessons designed to capture their imagination. Through the wide range of practical activities provided for pupils, the curriculum successfully enriches pupils' experiences and stimulates their enjoyment in learning. As a result, the pupils are keen to learn and play a full part in lessons.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From low starting points, including poor social skills and extremely limited knowledge and understanding of the world around them when they join the Nursery, pupils make satisfactory progress in their academic development. Owing to the high turnover of pupils and the small size of year groups, the overall attainment of pupils fluctuates from term to term. In most years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are below average. Typically, pupils do best in mathematics, while the consistently weakest area of their performance is reading. Although pupils are competent in using their knowledge of letter sounds as an aid to reading, their lack of vocabulary and fluency in English adversely affect their comprehension. This in turn affects the progress they are able to make in all other subjects. Opportunities to develop pupils' language skills are frequently missed because adults, keen to involve pupils in discussions, readily accept pupils' responses while overlooking poor speech patterns and incorrect grammar or sentence structure.

Despite the many good features of teaching, pupils' learning is too often satisfactory. Teachers are good at planning their lessons so that learning is developed progressively, often with a strong emphasis on the practical experiences that most pupils need, and all lessons feature clear learning objectives, which teachers share with the pupils. However, these objectives are not always set out in simple language which is readily understood by pupils. In addition, teachers do not always focus their pupils on precisely what they need to do to improve their skills in literacy by setting clear individual targets for them to achieve. This view is confirmed by the pupils interviewed, none of whom had a clear idea of precisely what they need to do to improve, for example, their writing. Opportunities for improving literacy are sometimes missed as a result of the cross-curricular approach to the curriculum. For example, basic writing skills, such as spacing between words, were

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overlooked when pupils were asked to produce an evaluation of a design and technology project.

The school has put a lot of effort into promoting cohesion within its own community and is successfully integrating 'hard pressed' and hard-to-reach families. It fully recognises that it now needs to promote community cohesion further by broadening pupils' awareness of the range of cultural traditions within British society and their understanding of the day-to-day lives of people in other countries.

Much of the improvement currently taking place stems largely from the strategic view developed by the headteacher. The newly appointed managers have good skills and understanding of their roles but are yet to have a demonstrable impact on the achievement of pupils. Many governors are yet to develop the range of skills required to help them become independent in holding the school to account. The school's procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are sound and provide the basis for a clear plan of action. These features and the actions taken to secure improvement mean that the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in reading and writing, by ensuring that:
 - all adults focus on improving pupils' vocabulary, comprehension and understanding of the rules of grammar and sentence structure by consistently modelling correct usage of English, particularly in day-to-day discussions with pupils
 - teachers use simple language when setting out learning objectives and set targets for improvement in writing that are clearly understood by pupils.
- Ensure that pupils have a good understanding of the richness and diversity of British society and of the day-to-day lives of people in other countries.
- Develop the skills of governors in monitoring the work of the school so that they are better informed in holding the school to account for its actions.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

All of the parents or carers who returned the inspection questionnaires felt that their children enjoy school. This is because the school clearly understands the social and emotional needs of the families it serves and meets these exceptionally well. It has, for example, identified that it needs to compensate for gaps in the life experiences of pupils by providing a wide range of first-hand learning opportunities. These heighten pupils' enjoyment of education and help motivate them. The excellent progress made by pupils in developing skills in working collaboratively and independently, and their willingness to learn, help ensure that they play a full part in lessons. This was evident, for example, when pupils in Year 2 responded well to new learning about the way in which the values of digits change according to their position within a number (place value). Despite the difficulties presented by the challenging concept, they stayed focused and did their best to

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answer the teacher's questions. Pupils' responses in this lesson highlighted the year-on-year fluctuations in attainment and showed that those currently in Year 2 are working at a broadly average level and are unlikely to match the above average standards in mathematics achieved last year.

The new leader for special educational needs has made significant improvements in the way in which pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified and the individual education plans that map out their provision. However, the impact of these improvements on pupils' achievement is yet to be seen. Overall, these pupils progress at the same rate as other pupils. However, those with severe learning difficulties are very well supported, fully integrated into class activities, and make good progress in relation to their starting points. A designated teaching assistant for special educational needs helps ensure this good progress.

The politeness and consideration shown by pupils reflect the well-established and consistently applied procedures for promoting good behaviour. Instances of unacceptable behaviour are generally caused by a few pupils with identified emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils' enthusiasm for sporting activities demonstrates their clear understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and is acknowledged in the Healthy School award, the Activemark accreditation, and a recent gold award from the local schools' sports partnership. Pupils make a positive contribution to the wider community through, for example, a range of fundraising for various charities and weekly visits by groups of pupils to a local day centre for the elderly. A clear moral code permeates the daily life of the school and pupils clearly know right from wrong. Pupils' spiritual awareness, as seen in their understanding of their own development and appreciation of that of others, is satisfactory.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Some of the teaching is good, but too much is satisfactory. There are many good features of teaching in all classes. For example, teachers are good at managing their pupils, make effective use of the time available, ensure that lessons proceed at a good pace, and are skilled in providing clear explanations about new concepts. In response to the previous inspection, the accuracy of teacher's assessments of their pupils has improved, although the school acknowledges that further work needs to be done to embed practice. As a result, work is generally pitched at suitably challenging levels. In all lessons, teaching assistants work well in partnership with the teachers, although, in common with the teachers, they miss opportunities to develop pupils' spoken language. The impact of teaching on pupils' learning is not always as good as it should be because the targets set for pupils to achieve are not always clear enough. However, this is not the case where teaching is good. For example, a lively and well-organised lesson in Years 1 and 2 resulted in good learning. Pupils were focused well on their tasks because the outcomes expected of each group were clearly displayed on each table. Pupils' work on writing instructions was carefully reviewed by the teacher at the end of the lesson. To heighten pupils' focus, they wore 'magic glasses' to help them check that the key features of instructional writing required by the task were present in their work.

Curriculum planning is effectively underpinned by a clear framework for assessment. This framework helps ensure that subject-specific skills in all subjects are clearly identified

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within cross-curricular planning. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, weekly visits by specialist physical education coaches and an established programme of visits and visitors provide significant enrichment to pupils' experiences.

The outstanding provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils permeates all aspects of school life. The needs of individuals are extremely well known, and pupils feel valued members of the school 'family'. The impact of the well-being mentor is an important factor in the excellent progress made by pupils in developing good personal and social skills. She works very closely with the local education welfare officer in applying rigorous procedures which have improved attendance and punctuality. There are extremely clear, well-established, arrangements to induct pupils into school and ensure smooth transition to the next phase of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Parents' and carers' overwhelmingly positive views reflect their appreciation that this is an inclusive school in which discrimination has no place and which gives their children a sense of belonging. The direction provided in embedding ambition and driving improvement stems largely from the headteacher and is based on good systems for checking on the progress made by pupils. Owing to the high turnover of governors, the need to improve their skills, which was highlighted at the time of the last inspection, remains an area for development. The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear appreciation of the urgent need to develop governors' skills in monitoring the effectiveness of the school through, for example, training in understanding and using data so that they know what questions need to be asked.

Safeguarding procedures have a high profile and are rigorously applied. All of the required documentation is in place. The wide range of effective partnerships with local schools adds value to pupils' experiences. For example, they regularly take part in the Colchester Schools' Music Festival, and the partnership with Colchester United Community Sports Trust provides healthy cooking and activity sessions for pupils and their families. The school works hard to ensure that there are good opportunities for informal contact with parents and carers, because they do not generally respond well to formal communications. The 'Stay and Play Group' for parents and carers and their children meets weekly and is a good example of this sort of opportunity.

Work is in progress to improve the promotion of community cohesion. There are emerging links with schools in Wales and in the Gambia, but the school fully recognises that not enough is done to broaden pupils' horizons further.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make excellent progress in their social and emotional development, and satisfactory progress in all other areas of learning. By the time children move to Year 1, their personal, social and emotional development is close to what is expected at this age, and provides a secure platform for further good progress in this aspect of pupils' development in Key Stage 1. However, in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development, the children fall well short of the goals expected.

The children have ready access to a good range of interesting and enjoyable activities which effectively encourage independence and initiative both indoors and out. Thematic teaching, such as the work related to the story of 'The Gingerbread Man' in the Reception class, provides a wealth of learning opportunities. Adults are generally good at developing learning through constant dialogue about the activities being tackled. However, they are less adept at seizing opportunities to develop children's learning further by modelling grammatically correct responses for the children to repeat. The children's progress is carefully monitored so that provision can be suitably adjusted in response to what is learned.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

All of the parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaires gave positive responses to all of the questions posed. The inspectors' view is that these responses are entirely justified in respect of all questions relating to the welfare of pupils. However, improvements are needed in pupils' learning and progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at King's Ford Infant School and Nursery 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 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 146 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	85	5	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	79	7	21	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	65	11	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	76	7	21	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	27	79	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	68	11	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	79	6	18	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)	21	62	12	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	74	8	24	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	59	13	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	68	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	65	11	32	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	82	6	18	0	0	0	0

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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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



13 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of King's Ford Infant School and Nursery, Colchester, CO2 9AZ

I would like to thank all of you for being so welcoming and helpful when I visited your school. I think that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. This means that there are a lot of things that the school is doing right and some things that need to be improved. All the adults who help to run your school want it to improve. For this to happen, you need to make better progress in your work.

Here are some of the things that are best about your school.

You behave well and get on well with each other.

You feel safe because the staff take excellent care of you.

You know a lot about how to keep healthy and you are good at helping others.

Your teachers give you lots of interesting and exciting things to do.

Here are the things that need to be done to improve your school.

Your teachers and the other people who work with you in class need to help you to become better at speaking well. This is really important, because as you become more expert, you will find reading easier and will understand a lot more. I am sure that this will also help you in all your other work.

Some of you told me that you do not know exactly what you need to do to improve your work, so I want your teachers to make sure that, when they set work for you to do, they give you very clear targets to aim for, particularly in your writing.

I have also asked your school governors to improve the way that they check on the work that the school does. They also need to make sure that you learn more about children in other parts of this country and around the world.

You can all help by listening carefully to what your teachers have to say, trying your best to speak well, and working hard to reach the writing targets that your teachers set for you. I am sure that you are ready for this challenge!

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Thompson

Lead inspector

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