

Home Farm Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114752
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357610
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pamela Higham
Headteacher	Mo Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed seven

- teachers in 16 lessons. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, groups of pupils and staff. Different aspects of the school's work were observed and documentation scrutinised, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning. Inspectors also considered the questionnaire responses from 98 parents and carers and 113 pupils.

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

- Does school data and other evidence, including assessment on entry, indicate that pupils now make good progress over their time in school?
- Is there a continued variation in the rate of progress between the two key stages and does this relate to any significant difference in the quality of teaching and provision?
- Is provision for care, guidance and support strong and to what extent does it ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress?
- What are the positive features of the school's provision for Early Years Foundation Stage and is it outstanding?
- How successful have leaders and managers, including the governing body, been in developing key aspects including pupils' progress tracking, safeguarding and community cohesion?

Information about the school

Home Farm is an average sized primary school that draws its pupils from east Colchester. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage but there is a small but increasing proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has Sportsmark, Activemark and national Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Home Farm is a good school. Its successful efforts to establish a stable and effective teaching team and to provide good care and support have enabled it to develop a positive learning environment in which pupils make good progress.

Pupils make a good start in Reception with continued good progress over the next six years to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching the highest levels of attainment is more modest, though it is at least in line with that nationally and is beginning to improve. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress as well as their peers.

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire say that their children are secure in school and pupils readily agree that they feel safe and well supported. Pupils are positive about school, reflected in their above average attendance, and eager participation in the engaging lessons, assemblies and activities. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and pupils know that any concerns they may have are quickly addressed. There is a strong commitment to healthy lifestyles evident in pupils' healthy eating, enjoyment of pre-lesson physical exercises and high levels of participation in sports, including swimming where pupils benefit from having a school pool. Pupils know their local area well and have a good and growing awareness of other faiths and cultures through various school visits and the celebration of different pupils' religious and ethnic backgrounds.

The school has largely overcome a period of considerable staff change and has a good team of both new and experienced teachers and learning support staff. These work together to provide effective and often 'fun' learning opportunities although on occasion some of the lessons are not as challenging as they could be for the more able pupils. Marking is regular and positive though does not link as closely as it could to the good procedures for identifying and tracking pupils' progress. The developing curriculum includes successful strategies to improve pupils' reading and writing, good use of information and communication technology to enhance learning and a wide range of after-school sports and other activities. Guidance is good in the way the school monitors each pupil closely and has well developed and responsive systems to deal with concerns.

The school is led well by an experienced headteacher who receives good support from a team of committed staff. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and senior leaders are particularly accurate in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. The governing body plays a major part in school development, providing considerable specialist advice and support and is rigorous in ensuring all children are safe and well protected. The school makes considerable efforts to consult parents and take account of their concerns though responses in the parents' questionnaire indicate that a number are unaware of the development the school has made in setting up good

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procedures for tracking pupils' progress. The staff and the governing body have worked successfully to improve teaching and the curriculum and maintain strengths in the care and support for pupils. There has been a steady improvement in pupils' progress, most notably in English, and the strong provision in Reception ensures all children make a good start to their education. Overall, the school has demonstrated that it has good capacity to sustain its strengths and improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of pupils achieving the higher National Curriculum levels by providing more varied challenge in whole class teaching and group work.
- Provide pupils and their parents and carers with clear and constructive guidance by:
 - ensuring that teachers' marking shows pupils how they can improve their work in terms of the National Curriculum levels used in pupils' progress tracking record books
 - conveying information of pupils' progress more regularly to parents and carers with opportunities for parental response.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children start in the Reception class with skills and experiences broadly in line with those expected for their age. Their personal, social and emotional development and speaking and listening are stronger than writing and calculation which are less well developed. By the time they move into Year 1, they have well-developed personal and social skills and are often confident speakers with better than average reading. Their attainment in writing and numeracy is in line with expectations for their age and over the next two years they make sufficiently good progress to reach standards a little above average at the end of Year 2. They are helped in this by the school's literacy programme which emphasises phonics and writing skills. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6 and reach standards clearly above average by the time they leave. This is particularly the case in English, where the 'Big Write' programme helps pupils to develop their extended writing skills. Progress in mathematics, while still good, is not as strong although the school has introduced a new numeracy resource in earlier years with positive effect. Current progress seen in lessons and in the school's tracking records show that almost all pupils are on target to make expected or better progress with a higher than average proportion reaching Level 5 and some achieving Level 6. The detailed school tracking shows that pupils who speak English as an additional language do as well as others. While pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities start at a lower attainment level, their rate of improvement mirrors that of their classmates.

Lesson observations confirmed pupils' good learning in the different years. Pupils in a Year 4 class, for example, were all using the same theme of writing a newspaper article about a mysterious animal that captured pupils' interest. The writing tasks were carefully matched to their existing writing skills with lower and middle ability pupils given a format to record their research notes while higher abilities were able to devise their own note-taking system. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the very different abilities resulted in each group working on different activities and levels, with the least able being well supported in

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adding decimal numbers while the most able were using a range of arithmetic calculations for problem solving.

Pupils are confident that adults will deal swiftly with any concerns they may have.

They make considerable use of information and communication technology and are aware of the importance of internet safety. School council members feel they are 'really trusted' to run their own affairs and take responsibility. They show considerable initiative in running auctions to fund support for children's schooling in Uganda and choosing outdoor play equipment. Pupils are very active in the local community, have their own eco council and serve as sports and house captains. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and is evident in pupils' reflective attitudes and readiness to help others. A particularly strong assembly led by the headteacher showed this well, as many Year 2 and 5 pupils shared their experiences of visiting a Hindu temple as well producing lamps and learning dance sequences for Diwali.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Teachers and learning support staff have good knowledge of their pupils and

- establish positive relationships with them. Lessons often reflect teachers' imagination and creativity in producing interesting and purposeful lessons that fully engage pupils. Lesson activities usually provide varied levels of challenge to match the

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abilities and needs of the pupils and the teaching assistants provide effective help to individuals and groups. Staff work as a team to share a common format for lesson planning which helps in providing pupils with a consistently good learning experience. There is some variation in quality, with some lessons not matching the best practice seen of ensuring both lesson presentations and subsequent group work provide sufficient challenge and pace for all pupils. Assessment and target setting have improved with the use of 'Assessing Pupil Progress' booklets in which pupils, with their teachers, can record their progress, though marking makes insufficient reference to the booklets.

The curriculum is rightly focused on improving literacy and numeracy with considerable enhancement which includes teaching Spanish in Years 1 and 2, various scheduled after-school activities attended by most pupils and opportunities for out-of-school experiences, including a residential visit to the Fens during the inspection. Care and support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good. The school works closely with the different support agencies to provide and manage additional support that enables these pupils to make good progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have worked well to sustain school improvement, despite a period of high staff turnover following the last inspection, and have ensured that any temporary slowing of pupils' progress has been resolved. The good tracking system is used well to ensure that all individuals and groups are making appropriate progress and that intervention is put in place where necessary to ensure they have equal opportunities. This has been helpful in narrowing the attainment gap between boys and girls. The governing body has developed considerably since the last inspection and has a more significant and informed role in the school's strategic development. It has an increasingly informed understanding of data about pupils' performance, enabling it to participate knowledgeably in school improvement. Its members also contribute professional expertise to key areas such as personnel and financial management. Risk assessment and child protection systems are good and safeguarding is monitored closely by the governing body. The school site is very secure with effective use of closed circuit television. The school is well advanced in its provision for community cohesion, evident in the range of its curriculum and the links it has with China, Abu Dhabi, Spain and the London Borough of Southwark. It additionally makes effective use of parents of different faiths and cultural backgrounds to enhance the curriculum.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Through effective learning support, children settle well into the life of the school and make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. By the start of Year 1, children's knowledge and skills are in line with national expectations though with continued strengths in personal development and well-being. For example, by that time they confidently express their ideas and feelings in a large group. Children's behaviour is good. They are polite and courteous and play well together. They have a good attitude to learning and are confident to work both independently and to ask for help when needed.

Staff are sensitive to children's needs and know how best to engage them in learning. The learning areas both inside and out are varied and attractive and staff endeavour to provide a good balance between adult led and child initiated activities. An adult-led class session on identifying birds and animals was well planned with good use of information and communication technology to present pictures. Regular observations of children's needs and interests are made to plan future learning activities. Assessment of children's progress is thorough if a little over-generous and the use of phonics to help children to develop writing is established in Reception and built on in later years. The overall effectiveness of leadership and management is clearly good. Resources are very well managed, teaching and learning are effective, the learning areas are safe and good progress is being made to provide a seamless progression from Reception into Year 1.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Home Farm is a popular, oversubscribed school and the great majority of parents and carers are happy with the provision the school makes. Even so, a number of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire have some concerns about their children's progress and the extent to which they are kept informed about that progress. Inspectors found that the great majority of pupils make good progress though some of the most able could on occasion be challenged more. The school has recently developed effective progress tracking though information is not disseminated to parents as well or as often as it could be. Inspectors saw good behaviour and very positive attitudes from pupils throughout the school so inspection findings do not endorse some parents' and carers' concern about the way behaviour is managed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Home Farm Primary School 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 98 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	61	38	39	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	66	32	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	41	47	48	10	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	42	40	41	15	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	56	57	34	35	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	47	40	41	10	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	61	35	36	2	2	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)	51	52	40	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	46	39	40	9	9	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	29	54	55	11	11	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	29	51	52	13	13	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	36	37	46	47	9	9	5	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	50	41	42	8	8	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.



18 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Home Farm Primary School, Colchester, CO3 4JL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We found it

- gives you a good education, and ensures that most of you achieve well by the time
- you leave. Your school has numerous strengths but what we particularly liked was the way the school helps you to settle in and take an active part in the life of the school.

You told us the school is a very safe place to be and we were pleased to see how

- well behaved you are and how you work well together in lessons. You are all clearly committed to healthy lifestyles which we could see in your healthy eating, your obvious enjoyment in the 'Take Ten' physical activity and your considerable involvement in different sports after school. We were also very impressed with how much you like to be involved in the life of the school through the school council, eco-council and as house and sports captains. We enjoyed the assemblies too and noted how ready you are to both contribute and listen to each other and take an interest in the wider world.

Many of your parents told us how much you like school, and this is reflected in your above average attendance. You get on with your teachers and support staff and they plan different activities that make your learning interesting and fun and help you to make progress. We found that some of you could sometimes cope with harder work and have asked the school to provide it. The school has given you useful progress booklets which are helping you see how well you are doing. To help in this, we have asked teachers to make it clearer how you can improve the work in your books to get to the higher National Curriculum levels and to tell your parents about this.

The headteacher, the governing body and all the staff are working hard to further

- improve your school. You can all help its improvement by maintaining your
- good attendance and taking an active part in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston

Lead inspector

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