

Hamstel Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114770
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	357615
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	463
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Wright
Headteacher	Paul Gwilliam
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Seventeen lessons were observed involving all 16 class teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, staff, the local authority and the school's partnership headteacher. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at pupils' work in each class, the school's progress tracking system, policies and safeguarding documentation, improvement plans and the local authority review report. They analysed 175 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 100 pupil questionnaires and 38 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at three key questions.

- Are all pupils making enough progress especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, Year 3 pupils and those for whom English is an additional language?
- Is the quality of teaching consistently effective to ensure that pupils make steady progress as they move through the school?
- Have the school's leaders a secure enough understanding of what is required to sustain improvement?

Information about the school

This is a larger than average junior school and serves the local community. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and transfer from the on-site infant school. A few pupils are from minority ethnic groups with a small number in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also above average.

The school has experienced considerable disruption to staffing in the past year due to illness and maternity leave. Two new deputy headteachers and two new members of the middle management team joined the school in September 2010. In January 2011, the local authority facilitated a partnership agreement with a local school.

The school has Healthy School and Investors in People awards and the Splash Language Award.

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?**4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation pupils' attainment and their learning and progress. Marked improvement is also required in the quality of teaching, especially in teachers' use of assessment information to plan the right sort of work to challenge and support the learning of the least-able and more-able pupils and those who are learning English as an additional language. Significant improvement is also needed in the headteacher's and governing body's understanding and use of management strategies to drive improvement.

Hamstel Junior school has declined in its effectiveness since the last inspection in 2007. The majority of issues raised by that inspection have not been tackled effectively. The school is not providing an adequate education for its pupils. Pupils' attainment is low and they make very limited progress. They are not achieving as well as they should. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The strengths identified at the last inspection remain. The headteacher and governing body are successful in creating a school with a welcoming ethos where all pupils feel safe. Good attendance is positively encouraged and rewarded. Pupils enjoy school and demonstrate this with their good attendance. Their behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and at playtimes. They are kind and considerate to one another and enjoy the good opportunities to take on responsibilities within the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good idea of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy.

Staff know pupils well so that any unhappiness or uncharacteristic behaviour is noted quickly and something is done. Good partnerships with outside agencies ensure that pupils with a high level of need are catered for effectively. Good deployment of learning mentors and counsellors supports those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and ensures they are happy and cope well in school.

Previously, the school's leaders had identified the need to improve pupils' progress and attainment and the monitoring of lessons had occurred, but this did not produce a precise picture of what exactly needed to be done or how best to achieve this. Until the appointment of two deputy headteachers in September 2010, there had not been enough drive to secure improvement at a good rate. The deputy headteachers demonstrate vision and ambition and have galvanised middle management and teaching staff. They provide excellent examples of good practice through their own teaching. Progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching since September because the deputy headteachers have used the outcomes of rigorous monitoring to concentrate their support on specific

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areas to develop teachers' practice. The school's monitoring shows a reduction in the amount of inadequate teaching and an increase in the proportion that is good. The capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. An appropriate plan is in place which identifies the roles of the local authority and partner school to support future improvement work. The local authority has provided training for teachers in assessing pupils' understanding in mathematics and is planning future work. As a result, assessment has improved and pupils are set suitable targets. Partnership arrangements with another school are providing additional support at the most senior level.

In areas of the school's work such as safeguarding, finance and supporting and challenging subject leaders, the governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors recognise their need for further training in the use of school data.

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate. Strengths in all lessons are the good relationships between pupils and staff. There are two main reasons why teaching and the use of assessment are judged to be inadequate. Firstly, teachers are not consistently using what they know about pupils' prior attainment to plan activities which address the needs of all the pupils. Secondly, teachers lack sufficient understanding of pupils' specific learning difficulties or stage of language acquisition. As a consequence, they do not always plan appropriate work or provide teaching assistants with precise instructions as to how to support pupils to maximise their learning. In Year 3 for instance, pupils do not make enough progress because most of their teachers do not have a good enough understanding of how pupils develop early literacy and numeracy skills. This leads to discontinuity in the pupils' learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management provided by the headteacher and governing body by:
 - developing their understanding of successful management strategies to sustain improvements in the quality of provision and pupil outcomes
 - increasing the governing body's understanding of how to analyse assessment data in order to hold the school's leadership to account for its performance.
- Raise standards and increase the rate at which pupils make progress in their learning by:
- improving the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to a consistently good level
 - ensuring better continuity of learning for pupils in Year 3 by strengthening links with the infant school so that teachers' understanding of how pupils' early literacy and numeracy skills can be developed
 - developing teachers' understanding of how to provide matched work and challenge for more-able pupils
 - developing teachers' understanding of how to address the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language.
- Improve provision and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by:

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- ensuring that teachers have a thorough understanding of pupils' learning difficulties and how these are to be addressed
- ensuring that teachers provide precise direction for teaching assistants in their support for these pupils
- conducting rigorous and regular monitoring of the quality of provision and pupil outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

School and national data confirm that pupils' progress is inadequate as they move from Year 3 to Year 6. National test results for the end of Key Stage 2 indicate that attainment has improved since 2007 but overall is still low. The best improvement has been in English in the past two years where attainment in 2010 attainment was just below average. However, attainment in science dropped considerably in the same year.

Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that there are some classes where current progress is at least satisfactory but this is not a consistent picture across the school. Where teaching is outstanding, as in a Year 5 lesson taught jointly by the class teacher and a deputy headteacher, progress was good. The tasks were appropriate and teachers quickly noted if pupils were not able to demonstrate an acute or right angle and adjusted their teaching accordingly.

In their response to the inspection questionnaire a few parents and carers of Year 3 pupils expressed concern that their children had not made much progress since they started in the junior school. Inspectors' lesson observations and scrutiny of Year 3 work indicate inconsistent progress in these classes. Overall, Year 3 pupils are not making enough progress. For example; in an inadequate literacy lesson observed, the work and expectations for different groups of pupils were inappropriate. Consequently, less-able pupils did not understand what was expected of them and more-able pupils were not challenged enough.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make inadequate progress as a whole although good pastoral support has made a particular difference to some individuals, resulting in more confident learning. Where pupils work in small groups, out of the class, to develop their spelling skills they make good progress.

Pupils enjoy learning and even when the pace of lessons is too slow, they behave well. Their personal development is good. They show a good level of respect for one another's opinions and work very well in groups. Older pupils take pride in being members of the school council or a prefect. They know their opinions are valued and believe that they make a difference to the school and to other organisations when they organise fund-raising for national and local charities. Pupils also learn mentorship skills and help resolve disputes. They are thoughtful and can empathise with others as demonstrated in an excellent 'circle time' session. Pupils considered the feelings of refugees arriving at prison camps and demonstrated great maturity in their responses.

Pupils have a good understanding of their personal targets but not always of the steps required to meet them. They have a good understanding of health and safety matters in relation to medicines, computers and their personal welfare. Pupils also have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and many take the opportunity to cycle to school and belong to after-school clubs for sporting activities.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
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	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Although the quality of teaching is inadequate, the recent emphasis on monitoring, and staff training has begun to improve teachers' practice. Particularly effective work is evident through 'paired teaching' opportunities with the deputy headteachers and by working alongside teachers in another school. However, there is much more to do.

Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage them well. In the majority of lessons however, teachers do not promote good progress for pupils because assessment information is not used precisely enough to plan for their individual needs. Lessons are frequently pitched at a level suitable for the pupils' age but not to their stage of learning. Too often teachers do not recognise that some pupils have gaps in their learning while others could achieve more if challenged to do so. Although they do their best, teaching assistants lack a clear understanding of pupils' specific learning difficulties and receive insufficient guidance from teachers. However, when working with small groups, for example, on how to use letter sounds to help with spelling, the impact of teaching assistants' work is greater. In these sessions, which are managed outside of mainstream classes, pupils often make good progress.

There are many interesting aspects to the curriculum, especially the range of visits and visitors which widens pupils' horizons and enlivens their work. In everyday lessons however, the curriculum is inadequate because it does not meet the learning needs of

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pupils well enough. For example, work provided for more-able pupils lacks challenge and for pupils who require extra help, the support provided, is inconsistent in helping them to improve. Pupils know their targets and the national curriculum level they are working towards, but they are not always sure how they will achieve them.

Pupils enjoy the breakfast club. It provides a good selection of food but there are very few activities on offer for when pupils have finished their meal.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The deputy headteachers are a highly effective team and are having a very positive influence on school improvement. Since September, using assessment data and a rigorous programme of lesson observations, they have gained a very clear picture of what needs to be done to improve the outcomes for pupils. The resulting action plan includes support from the local authority for further staff training. Improvements are already evident in classrooms. Middle managers, half of whom were new to the school in September 2010, are developing their roles well in order to help staff improve their practice. Their half-termly progress meetings with their year group teachers highlights what teachers need to do to improve individual pupil's progress and teachers are held to account for the progress these pupils make. These measures are beginning to make a difference but their impact on improving outcomes for pupils is at an early stage.

Pastoral and safeguarding care for pupils is consistently good because the senior learning support assistant is vigilant and provides effective support to those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils who have difficulty managing their behaviour receive good support so that their learning is not disrupted. Safeguarding procedures are robust, known by all and are checked regularly by the governing body. However, the robustness of systems for tracking the learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the few pupils in the early stages of learning English has been weakened by the long-term staff absence.

Overall, governance is satisfactory. The Chair of the Governing Body provides strong leadership by ensuring that new members take advantage of training and all governors visit the school regularly and provide reports of their visits. Policies are reviewed rigorously and incidents and complaints dealt with efficiently and sensitively. The effective deployment of a learning mentor and a counsellor is helping to break down any barriers to learning and satisfactorily promotes equality of opportunity. Through a programme of philosophy for children, pupils have a well-developed sense of respecting and valuing differences. They have a good sense of fairness. The school is a cohesive community. It

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has good links with the local community and beyond. The links with a school in India are beneficial in developing pupils' consideration of cultures other than their own.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	4

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are happy with their children's experience of school. They say that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. A few parents and carers expressed concerns regarding their children's progress or reported that they did not feel well informed about the progress which their children make. A few also felt that the school did not help them to support their children's learning.

These concerns were followed up during the inspection. Inspectors found that pupils are not making enough progress. They also found that parents and carers are invited to discuss their child's progress with teachers and that teachers and the headteacher make themselves available to parents at the start and end of school days so that any concerns or suggestions can be dealt with promptly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hamstel Junior 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 175 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 463 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	50	78	45	7	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	87	50	83	47	4	2	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	52	30	96	55	25	14	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	29	99	57	22	13	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	56	32	110	63	6	3	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	23	105	60	25	14	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	27	104	59	17	10	4	2
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)	43	25	100	57	17	10	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	27	101	58	16	9	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	29	95	54	23	13	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	15	114	65	19	11	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	51	29	109	62	4	2	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	40	91	52	6	3	7	4

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



7 February 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Hamstel Junior School, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 9PQ

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school recently. We were impressed with your good manners and kindness. My particular thanks to those of you who sat and talked to us at lunchtime and shared their thoughts and ideas about the school with us.

We think that you are looked after well and kept safe in school. Although some things are working well, we are concerned that teaching is not yet good enough to help all of you make steady progress in your learning as you move through the school. So, because we are concerned, we have judged that the school needs a 'notice to improve'. This means that inspectors will return in a few months to make sure that things are improving. We have asked the governors and staff to do three things to make the school better.

Improve teaching so that it is always good and you can make rapid progress. We have also asked teachers to make sure that children who need extra help with their learning get the right sort of support. For those of you who find learning quite easy, we have asked teachers to make sure you have to think hard about your work.

Make sure governors and your headteacher improve the way they organise teachers' responsibilities.

Make sure that Year 3 teachers learn more about how you were taught literacy and numeracy in the infant school so that they can quickly build on what you have already learned.

Your headteacher and senior teachers provide satisfactory leadership and know what needs to be done. They are going to receive some help from another school and from the local authority to support them in their work. We hope that you will all continue to try your best, even when your teachers make you think harder!

Thank you again for your help and all good wishes for your success.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector

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