

Hempstead Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118555
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358378
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Dunn

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	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Gardiner
Headteacher	Kate Dadd
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw 17 lessons taught by nine staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils, parents and carers, staff and representatives of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning, monitoring, a range of policy documents and records, the minutes of governing body meetings and a range of pupils' work and assessments. They also analysed 76 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and 25 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How much boys' progress in writing is accelerating and whether enough pupils are on track to attain the highest levels in mathematics.
- How consistent progress is across Key Stage 1.
- How well the school customises teaching and the curriculum to meet the needs of different groups and the interests of boys in particular.
- The breadth and extent of effective action taken by leaders at different levels to secure significant and rapid enough improvement.

Information about the school

This is an above-average size infant school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with the remainder from a range of ethnic minority groups. The proportion that speaks English as an additional language is above average, but very few pupils are at the early stages of language acquisition. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than average. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average.

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

Hempstead Infants is a good school where pupils achieve well. Many aspects of its work have improved significantly since the previous inspection and the school now has some outstanding features. These include the quality of care and the extent to which pupils feel safe. Vibrant displays throughout the school celebrate pupils' achievements and combine with excellent relationships at all levels to create an exceptionally positive learning environment. Above-average attendance reflects both this and pupils' good levels of enjoyment. One parent summed it up by describing the school as 'a very safe, nurturing environment'. Enthusiastic and extensive take-up of a wide range of healthy activities reflects pupils' outstanding adoption of healthy lifestyles.

Children get off to good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where teaching is good. Careful and reflective planning has effectively balanced regular opportunities for children to learn through self-chosen activities with good quality, adult-led focus sessions. Although progress across Key Stage 1 is good overall, it is less consistent, particularly in Year 1 where there is a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching than in the rest of the school. Where progress is satisfactory, it is sometimes because pupils have too little time to work independently on their tasks to achieve well. Effective deployment of teaching assistants helps customise lesson introductions to meet different needs. This sometimes, though not always, includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make good progress in line with their peers. In most lessons, teachers plan different tasks for different groups, but sometimes this focuses too much on the quantity rather than the quality of work. Consequently, though a very small minority of pupils make outstanding progress over time, teaching and tasks are not always matched sharply enough to different needs to promote consistently good or better achievement.

Adaptations made to the curriculum to ensure topics sufficiently motivate and inspire boys have paid off, particularly in accelerating and securing their good progress in writing. Regular opportunities in mathematics for pupils to solve 'real-life' problems contribute well to their good progress. Consequently, the number of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics has risen significantly this year. However, though satisfactory links exist between mathematics and other subjects, these are less extensive and creative than those in other areas, so pupils have too few opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills across the curriculum.

Good systems for monitoring and evaluating performance, and effective plans to continue a good pace of development, underpin the improvements seen. School leaders have a realistic and accurate picture of the school's effectiveness. The governing body has an increasing understanding of this, and a well-tuned perspective of its own currently satisfactory contribution. Newly introduced monitoring procedures focus more sharply on specific areas. This is beginning to enable the governing body to offer more challenge to

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leaders in their shared drive to secure further improvement, though this is still at an early stage. Involvement of leaders at all levels has increased the effectiveness of a broad range of the school's provision. Pupils' achievement, teaching and the curriculum are just some of the key areas that have moved from satisfactory to good since the previous inspection. Taking all of this into account, the school has a good capacity to sustain further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress across the school so that it is consistently at least good and the proportion that is outstanding increases by:
 - ensuring that teaching, particularly in Year 1, is consistently at least good
 - always allowing pupils enough time to work on tasks that are sharply customised to their needs
 - strengthening links between mathematics and other subjects to increase opportunities for pupils to use and apply their skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by consistently implementing new monitoring systems so that it can better hold leaders to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From starting points that are in line with expected levels, pupils' good progress means that attainment in reading and mathematics has been consistently above average at the end of Key Stage 1 for over three years, and broadly average in writing. Pupils engage enthusiastically in their learning, responding positively to the variety of strategies their teachers use. The good quality additional work and research that pupils have completed in their 'Home-School Learning Journals' demonstrates their interest in curriculum topics, and also offers parents and carers good opportunities to engage with their children's learning. Pupils understand well how to use teachers' marking to make improvements to their work. This moves their learning in writing on particularly effectively because pupils regularly apply the suggested improvements in subsequent work, for example using connectives to write longer sentences. Consequently, pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to attain above-average levels in writing, as well as in reading and mathematics.

Pupils make good progress because they have enough opportunities to apply their basic skills. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 1 about halving even numbers, pupils had to work out the costs of items in a half-price sale. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson about perimeter, higher attaining pupils achieved well because the teacher's high expectations motivated them, the challenge being to find the perimeter of compound shapes. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities demonstrate similarly positive attitudes to their work, particularly in the good lessons where tasks have the right level of challenge for them. Additional support for these pupils is sometimes too adult-led, however, which can limit opportunities for them to practise their basic skills.

Pupils' behaviour is good across the varied activities throughout the school day. Pupils mix well and are respectful of each other's needs. They are entirely confident that adults deal promptly and effectively with any issues, though they say these seldom arise. Consequently, pupils feel safe in school at all times. Through assemblies and circle-times,

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pupils learn to reflect on the world around them and deepen their understanding of right and wrong. They engage enthusiastically in artistic, sporting, cultural and multi-cultural opportunities, for example through visiting a mosque or sampling Indian food. Pupils talk confidently, and with a great deal of knowledge, about many aspects of healthy lifestyles. They draw links with the gardening club and the 'Walk on Wednesdays' initiative, and act as effective ambassadors for healthy living. The very effective school council is just one of the ways that pupils have a strong voice in the running of the school.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?

Extremely well targeted support, guided by good links with other agencies and professionals, helps the school to break down possible barriers to engagement for those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. In particular, the 'Place2Be' therapeutic programme provides different levels of support according to need for pupils, as well as parents and carers, and has a demonstrable and significant impact on improving attitudes, confidence and achievement. Across the school, adults know individual children extremely well, and carefully and regularly track their progress and well-being, taking action if necessary to tackle quickly any potential underachievement. Excellent transition arrangements at all levels support pupils' smooth journey throughout the school and beyond.

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The curriculum is well organised and thoughtfully planned to interest and engage pupils. Though pupils mostly learn mathematics through designated numeracy lessons, links between literacy, information and communication technology and other subjects are good. Varied enrichment and extra-curricular activities have a positive impact on pupils' good, and sometimes outstanding, outcomes. Pupils in Year 2 were excited about their recent trip to the London Planetarium, utilised well by teachers to secure good work in a range of lessons.

Pupils are aware of the individual targets that teachers set them in English and mathematics so that many know what they need to do next to improve. For example, in an English lesson in Year 1, some pupils tried hard to remember finger spaces and capital letters when writing poems. However, some pupils are less certain of these and are not always sure how they can use them to check their own work to see when they have been successful. Teachers' effective questioning helps pupils to make links in their learning, though they sometimes miss opportunities to address misconceptions to promote more rapid progress. Flexible deployment of teaching assistants ensures their effectiveness, including withdrawing small groups, dividing the class in two for mental and oral starters in mathematics, or supporting particular pupils as part of the whole class. Teaching assistants have a positive impact on learning because they enjoy good relationships with pupils, are well prepared, and conduct activities in a purposeful manner.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Guided by the clear, focused leadership of the headteacher, the whole school community works cohesively to secure improvement. One parent commented on feeling 'very proud' to be able to say their child attends the school. Clearly defined leadership roles, with year-group leaders and teams working alongside leaders responsible for individual subjects across the school, have effectively created a strong 'web-like' structure to secure and drive improvements. The school sets itself challenging targets and leaders at all levels have contributed to the creation of clear and effective plans to meet them. However, these plans do not always include sufficiently precise interim measures to check that actions are having the impact initially intended. Following an unsettled period with a number of changes to its membership, the governing body has taken appropriate steps to ensure its currently satisfactory effectiveness is quickly improving. It has harnessed the enthusiasm of new members of the governing body by developing effective induction procedures.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's promotion of community cohesion has resulted in the effective development of links with other communities, including internationally. The

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school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind and racist incidents are extremely rare. The school identifies and tackles any variation in performance between groups and consequently gaps are closing, for example between boys and girls in writing. A broad range of mechanisms support the school's good engagement with parents and carers, including text messaging, e-mail, contact books and regular face-to-face contact. As one parent said, 'I like the many ways they encourage families into the school and make it very easy to approach any member of staff.' Established and robust systems and procedures effectively safeguard pupils. The school works proactively with other agencies to promote pupils' safety and well-being. Staff receive relevant training in this area according to their roles and they know the school's policies and procedures well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding a mbition 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	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of learning and significant gains with their social, emotional and creative development, and use of language to communicate. Adults understand well how to promote younger children's learning and development. As one Reception parent put it, 'They allow them to be children and have effective learning through play', adding that their child had come on in 'leaps and bounds'. Good leadership and effective teamwork have secured a consistency of approach across the Reception classes. Creative use of the extensive indoor space to enable children from all the classes to access activities in any area helps secure their good engagement. The well-resourced and thoughtfully arranged areas combine with attractive displays of children's achievements to make the environment vibrant and stimulating. The current 'sea' theme was evident throughout, which inspired children when they planned together what they might do during times not directed by an adult.

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Adults interact well with children. A teacher skilfully captured the enthusiasm of a small group having a great time dressing up in beachwear, to move this on to using it as a stimulus to develop a story, which she scribed for them. Leaders have good plans to improve the quality of the outdoor provision by building on the imaginative use of the natural environment already made, to offer the same richness for children seen inside. Assessment procedures are well established and thorough. Adults make good use of opportunities to observe children's developing capabilities to plan their next steps in learning. Children also achieve well in adult-led focus sessions because adults are very clear about what they want children to learn and they make activities interactive and fun. For example, children enjoyed learning about pictograms as a way to show which was the most popular colour bucket, in response to an imagined telephone call from the owner of the seaside shop who needed to order some more. Children mix well and their eagerness to engage reflects that they feel safe and secure, supported by strong relationships at all levels. Varied opportunities allow them to develop a broad range of personal skills, such as in the organising and running of their own healthy 'snack bar'.

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

The response rate to the inspection questionnaire was within the range typically seen. Those that answered each question expressed unanimously positive views about most aspects of the school, with the large majority of parents and carers strongly agreeing. This included wholly positive opinions regarding their children's enjoyment and the school keeping them safe. Just over a quarter had written comments, which were also overwhelmingly positive about a wide range of areas. Inspectors discussed the very few individual concerns raised with school leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hempstead Infant 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 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 264 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	80	15	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	86	11	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	52	68	24	32	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	74	18	24	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	82	14	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	70	22	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	70	23	30	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)	60	79	15	20	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	68	20	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	55	29	38	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	58	30	39	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	53	70	22	29	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	78	17	22	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



24 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hempstead Infant School, Gillingham, ME7 3QG

Thank you very much for the lovely welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and you helped us to find a lot out about your school. You told us that you enjoy school and we can see that by how regularly you attend. We can also see why it is a good school. We particularly liked a number of things.

- You behave and achieve well, and do other good things to help in school, such as serving on the school council.
- You are enthusiastic about your learning and try hard to make your work better by doing what your teachers ask when they mark your work.
- You feel extremely safe at school, and know a lot about how to keep healthy.
- Adults in school take very good care of you.
- Teaching is good and helps you to make good progress with your learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do well because of the good teaching and environment.

Your headteacher and other leaders in school have made good plans to make it even better for you. To support them with this, we have asked them to help you learn even more quickly by making sure that all lessons are at least good, that your work is never too easy or too hard and that you have long enough to do it well, and to give you more chances to use your mathematics skills in other subjects. The governing body, who help your headteacher run the school, has a number of new members. We have asked them to carry on finding out all about the school so that they can help leaders that are in school every day by challenging them to make it the best it possibly can be.

You can all help by continuing to be enthusiastic about your learning and always trying your very best, particularly when set tasks to do.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn Lead inspector

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