

Little Heath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117567
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379442
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2011
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Redington
Headteacher	Kim Custis
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2006
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 13 lessons taught by eight different members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, and with staff and pupils. They looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, teachers' lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's documentation, which included records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Responses to inspection questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and by 97 parents and carers were also considered.

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

- The team looked at the consistency of progress which pupils make, particularly in writing, and their current levels of attainment.
- It considered the extent to which staff use assessment information effectively to plan challenging work to enable all pupils, particularly those identified as more able or gifted, to make good progress.
- It explored the effectiveness of senior leaders and managers and the governing body in developing the school's capacity to make improvements.

Information about the school

Little Heath Primary School is of similar size to the majority of primary schools. The school serves a mainly White British community. Only a small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Most children who enter the Nursery subsequently attend the Reception class. Since September 2011, the Nursery has begun to offer extended care arrangements, although numbers in the afternoon session are relatively low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties or speech and language issues. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is extremely low. The school offers breakfast and after-school clubs, both of which are managed by outside providers. These are inspected separately.

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

This is a satisfactory school. Although a high turnover in both the teaching staff and the governing body over the last three years has taken its toll on pupils' progress and outcomes, standards at the end of the last school year showed a good improvement. Pupils' progress overall is satisfactory, but with areas of more rapid progress, particularly in mathematics and reading. The school's commitment to pupils' personal development and their pastoral support is acknowledged by parents and carers to be a strength. Attendance is high. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is good. They feel outstandingly safe and have confidence in adults to deal with their concerns. They have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and enjoy participating in physical activities. Pupils' contribution to the school in undertaking daily tasks and their involvement with the local community are outstanding. There are fewer opportunities to engage with different groups from other areas of the United Kingdom.

Provision and children's progress in the Nursery and Reception classes are good. Pupils' learning, progress and achievement in Years 1 and 2 are satisfactory, leading to above average attainment, particularly in reading, at the end of Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, progress has been more erratic, although satisfactory overall. While test results recovered in 2011, following a dip in 2010, and were above average in mathematics and reading, progress was less rapid and outcomes lower in writing. The quality of pupils' recorded work in Years 3 to 6 and in lessons shows that standards are broadly average at present. The key weakness is that not enough priority has been given to improving pupils' writing, both their handwriting and the quality and presentation of their written work. This has a negative impact across several subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are satisfactorily supported and make steady progress. Those who speak English as an additional language make generally good progress. Some aspects of assessment, particularly around pupils' evaluation of their own work and that of others, are strongly developed. However, while teachers talk to pupils about their work, there is insufficient quality marking to enable all pupils to form a clear view of what they have achieved or to establish clear targets for improvement. This affects the rate at which some of them improve their work. The curriculum motivates pupils satisfactorily, with effective cross-curricular use of information and communication technology skills. Extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities are good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, underpinned by a coherent vision for improvement. There is a clear recognition of the key areas for development.

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However, monitoring is not yet sufficiently rigorous to drive change within a specific time frame. The school development plan has appropriate priorities and actions. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has several recently-appointed members and is working to build capacity in the monitoring and evaluation of school performance. The school has been proactive in developing most aspects of community cohesion. Overall, greater stability, good support from parents and carers, good quality Early Years Foundation Stage provision, improving progress, together with the commitment of staff and the governing body, all indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of pupils' progress in writing, and the standards reached, through:
 - implementing a coherent whole-school programme to improve handwriting
 - ensuring that staff expectations of the quality of presentation of pupils' written work are significantly raised
 - build upon existing opportunities for the development of extended writing tasks across the curriculum.
- Ensure that staff provide pupils with frequent written responses to their work, offering clear guidance as to the necessary next steps to take their learning forward.
- Ensure that the monitoring of the school's work is sufficiently rigorous so that:
 - the key expectations of senior leaders are consistently implemented
 - staff are held more accountable for the quality of work and rate of progress pupils make.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Most children enter Nursery, and subsequently Reception, with skills and experience above those normally found. When children enter Year 1, their attainment is above average, and sometimes higher, other than in writing which is closer to the national average. The school's efforts to sustain and improve pupils' progress and attainment have, until recently, been set back by staffing issues and a lack of continuity in teaching. This has improved in the last year, leading to better progress. Focused teaching which challenges and engages pupils, for example, in the 'extension' mathematics provision in Years 5 and 6, together with close monitoring of progress, has contributed to impressive outcomes for some pupils by the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the specialist training

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and expertise of support staff, although progress is satisfactory rather than good in some lessons because of a lack of sharpness in planning to ensure that tasks are closely matched to the needs of different groups.

Teachers often stimulate pupils’ interest well – for example in two history lessons for older pupils. One of these dealt with justice and punishments in Tudor times. Despite a slightly lengthy introduction, this engaged pupils’ interest really well, prompting some better quality extended writing. In another history lesson, tasks were not sufficiently well-planned to ensure that challenging extension activities were available for the most able. There was good practice in a Year 3 literacy lesson, when the class evaluated the strengths of other pupils’ writing. This successfully extended their understanding.

Personal development outcomes are a strength. Pupils demonstrate mature attitudes and treat each other and visitors with courtesy. The school council gives pupils some awareness of the democratic process. Good social skills and secure basic skills ensure that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for later life. Although pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, the spiritual dimension is not quite as evident as the stronger moral and social elements.

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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are generally well managed, relationships are consistently good and pupils are always keen to learn. Some lessons, such as those for able older mathematicians,

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

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have very focused objectives and promote progress effectively. In other lessons, teachers’ expectations are not always high enough. This is evident in the lack of challenge in some activities, and the relatively slow pace of some lessons, with excessive teacher talk constraining pupils’ opportunities to get to work. Expectations of the quality of pupils’ written work, particularly that of older pupils, have not been high enough. The school has successfully established a range of assessment strategies and there are significant strengths in pupils’ ability to evaluate their own work and review that of their classmates. While teachers give plenty of oral feedback to pupils, marking of their written work is spasmodic and seldom explicitly identifies targets or the next steps in learning. Consequently pupils are often unsure as to the direction and necessary pace of their future learning.

The curriculum provides an imaginative range of learning experiences and promotes cross-curricular skills satisfactorily, although opportunities for writing could be more effectively developed, particularly in the middle years of the school. While homework projects allow pupils to research themes which interest them some pupils find that these tasks lack sufficient structure to enable them to shape their learning in a progressive and purposeful way. The curriculum is satisfactorily adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The needs of pupils identified as gifted in mathematics are well supported through specialist extension teaching in Years 5 and 6, as well as occasional ‘sign-posting’ of activities in other schools. External partnerships contribute satisfactorily to extending pupils’ learning. A good range of visits, enrichment activities and good extra-curricular provision contribute well to pupils’ learning and enjoyment.

Transition arrangements are carefully planned, particularly in supporting pupils identified as potentially vulnerable. The school works effectively with support agencies. There is good practice, evident in several case studies, in supporting the health, social and behavioural needs of pupils who may find themselves in challenging circumstances.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Over a three-year period the headteacher has had to manage a significant turnover of both teaching staff and governors. Although key strengths, particularly around pupils’ personal development and the Early Years Foundation Stage, have been

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sustained, staffing issues have affected the pace of improvement across the school. However, senior leaders and staff have a clear shared vision for the school’s development and for the further improvement of pupils’ progress and outcomes, and have identified the school’s areas for development. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly with an increased focus on learning outcomes, and satisfactory systems including pupil review meetings are in place to hold staff to account. Some middle managers are relatively new to their roles and systems to ensure the rigorous evaluation of pupils’ work and progress are not yet fully effective. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

The governing body has experienced some turnover, but is growing in strength. Governors recognise the issues faced by the school in the recent past and are developing systems to monitor and support the school effectively and to enable them to contribute more fully to school self-evaluation. Governors fully meet their statutory responsibilities. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Governors have been proactive in ensuring that the premises offer a vibrant and very safe environment for pupils.

The school has worked hard to sustain good links with parents and carers and has employed a wide range of technologies to support these efforts. However, some parents and carers rightly feel that information on their children’s progress and attainment levels is not specific enough. Community cohesion is good. Pupils’ understanding of diverse faiths and lifestyles is promoted well through the curriculum. International links, including regular correspondence with a school in Sierra Leone, are well-established. The school is developing links to enable pupils to engage with diverse communities in the United Kingdom.

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	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	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a vibrant and engaging learning environment. Good leadership and management, an effective curriculum, good teaching, though stronger currently in the Nursery than in Reception, and high quality care, all ensure that most children make good progress in almost all areas of their learning and development across both Nursery and Reception classes. As one parent commented, 'The Nursery is a wonderful and exciting place'. An effective partnership is quickly formed with parents and carers, initially through home visits. As a result, parents and carers feel that their children have a really good start.

Staff make learning fun, challenging children to think and work together, as seen when Nursery children worked collaboratively to make 'buns' and 'cakes' from dough and sand. A love of learning is effectively promoted by staff and children are offered a purposeful range of activities which promote independence. The close focus on personal development and language and literacy skills continues throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Reception children demonstrate their developing linguistic skills. There is a consistent and skilled approach to the teaching of letters and sounds and good use is made of interactive whiteboards to motivate children. Reception staff ensure that all children have a mandatory daily session to help develop their writing skills, until recently a weaker area. Regular assessments and the completion of detailed 'Learning Journals' enable staff to track children's progress and plan the next steps in their learning. Staff use space and resources creatively so that children can access purposeful learning opportunities enhanced by dedicated environmental, music and water areas. This ensures an appropriate balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities, complemented by purposeful indoor and outdoor activities.

Children have a good understanding of the need to keep themselves healthy through good hygiene practice and understand the importance of eating fruit and vegetables. They appreciate the need to play safely and their behaviour is good. They play well together and all children contribute well to the smooth running of the day by sharing resources amicably and tidying away their activities.

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 majority of parents and carers who responded to the survey are happy with the

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school. Most feel that the school cares well for their children and that their children enjoy school and are very safe there. One said, 'The school provides a sound and stimulating education in a very happy environment'. While parents and carers identified many strengths, a few felt that they did not get enough information about their child's progress to know whether their needs were being met fully or to enable them to support their children at home. Others had concerns about the variability of teaching and the approach to homework. Inspectors support the positive views of parents and carers. The school works hard to engage with parents and carers and, to that extent, communication is effective. However, some parents and carers rightly recognise that shortcomings in the marking and annotation of pupils' work mean that neither parents and carers, nor pupils, are always given a clear view of the standards reached or of the next steps in learning. Inspectors also found that the open-ended nature of homework activities can result, for some children, in learning which appears to have no clear direction.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Little Heath 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 97 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 236 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	80	18	19	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	59	61	37	38	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	17	18	62	64	14	14	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	28	54	56	9	9	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	37	38	48	49	7	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	25	26	56	58	6	6	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	38	57	59	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)	29	30	46	47	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	35	36	50	52	11	11	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	28	52	54	4	4	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	23	57	59	11	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	39	45	46	6	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	48	49	40	41	5	5	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.

17 October 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Little Heath Primary School, Potters Bar, EN6 1JW

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, hearing your views and spending time in lessons. We found that yours is a satisfactory school, with important strengths. These are the things we liked best.

- You have good attitudes to learning.
- You feel exceptionally safe in school and behave well. Attendance is high.
- You contribute well to school and have good links with the local community.
- Staff care for you well.
- You really understand the importance of eating healthily and staying fit.
- The curriculum, while satisfactory, offers some interesting activities and visits. The provision for clubs and after-school activities is good.
- Those of you who need extra help generally make satisfactory progress.
- The headteacher and governors recognise what needs to be done to make the school better.

To help you do better, we have asked the school to:

- ensure that there is more focus on handwriting, presentation and the quality and development of your written work in every year group so that you make more rapid progress and reach higher standards in writing.
- ensure that teachers mark your work more frequently and tell you what you need to do next, so that you can improve your work more quickly.
- ensure that school leaders and subject leaders keep a close eye on the quality of your work and on the pace of your progress across the school.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

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