

Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117377
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379405
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2012
Lead inspector	Christopher Parker

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Robins
Headteacher	Hellen Phillimore
Date of previous school inspection	29 March 2009
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

Christopher Parker

Additional inspector

Kanwaljit Singh

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited fifteen lessons taught by eight teachers, talked with the pupils, and scrutinised samples of their work. Inspectors also met with two representatives of the governing body, and the members of staff with responsibility for leading English and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at records of behaviour, safeguarding policies, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and the school's key priorities for improvement. They analysed responses to questionnaires from 54 parents and carers, and 21 members of staff.

Information about the school

Holtsmere End is an average-sized infant and nursery school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there are two part-time Nursery classes and two full-time Reception classes. Two thirds of the pupils are White British. The rest of the school population is made up of pupils from a range of minority ethnic groups. One in five of the pupils' first languages is believed to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little lower than average but has risen in the recent past. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs and therefore receive extra support or who have a statement of special educational needs has also risen and is now broadly average. An increasing proportion of these pupils have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because the teaching does not ensure that the pupils' progress in writing is as fast as it could be. There are also shortcomings in outdoor provision, and a few pupils' attendance is too low.
- Achievement is good. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start. Those children who speak English as an additional language make good progress. They benefit from a broad range of interesting activities. However, the activities planned for the outdoor area do not always challenge all of them. The pupils make good progress although it is not as fast in writing as it is in reading and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly average.
- Teaching is effective because the headteacher frequently monitors its quality and identifies how lessons can be improved. The teachers have a shared commitment to promoting good progress and the good personal development of the pupils. All of the adults in the school ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported to make positive steps in their learning.
- The behaviour and safety of the pupils are good. Most pupils behave very well. A very few pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are effectively supported to help them to improve, and to ensure that learning is seldom interrupted. Most pupils have good attendance records, but a few are absent too often.
- The leadership and management of the school are good. There is a strong commitment to maintaining the good provision made for the pupils and to ensuring that they do as well as they can.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing by ensuring that the teaching provides:
 - a broader range of opportunities for writing throughout the school
 - higher expectations of the amount and quality of writing that more-able

- pupils can produce clearer steps to being successful, so that the pupils, particularly boys, know precisely what they need to do to make rapid progress.
- Extend and enrich the curriculum for outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that more-able children are consistently challenged.
- Improve the attendance of the few pupils who are frequently absent, by working even more closely with their parents and carers.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The children begin school with skills and abilities that are not as well developed as is expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress through activities which they choose themselves and those which are led by adults. However, opportunities to encourage children to begin to write are sometimes missed. Those children who are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language when they start school make good progress, both in their acquisition of English and in all areas of learning. By the end of the Reception Year, many children have reached a secure level of development. They continue to make good progress so that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average, and sometimes higher, by the end of Year 2. However, the pupils make better progress in reading and mathematics than they do in writing. In the recent past, girls have reached higher standards in writing than boys.

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire agree that their children are making good progress at this school. The pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well. Boys and girls listen carefully, are eager to answer their teacher's questions, and are enthusiastic in their approach. This was very evident in a mathematics lesson where Year 2 pupils tackled a range of problems, using and extending their calculation skills. Both boys and girls are similarly positive about reading, and are making good progress because of the improvements made in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). Those pupils who are not yet reading with confidence are able to use their knowledge of the sounds that groups of letters represent to read unfamiliar words.

In some year groups, there is a high proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. These pupils are well supported in lessons, and the work that they are set is often, although not always, matched well to their needs. As a result, most of them are making progress at the same pace as their peers. Those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals also do as well as their peers.

Quality of teaching

All of the parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire agreed that

their child is well taught, and this view is supported by inspection evidence. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, supportive relationships and a purposeful learning environment promote children's learning well. The teaching of letters and sounds through teacher-led activity is effective and ensures that children make good progress. Children enjoy the range of activities on offer – for example, when they were making a fruit salad for the Hungry Caterpillar. The adults are particularly adept at engaging disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in activities that improve their language and communication skills. There is a good flow of activity from indoors to outdoors, although some activities are not sufficiently modified or extended to challenge the more-able children.

In Years 1 and 2, activities are mostly well matched to pupils' learning needs. Since the last inspection, the teachers have increased the pace of introductions to lessons and reduced the time the pupils have to listen. In one introduction to retelling the story of Goldilocks, the teacher skilfully used a description of the character, written by one of the pupils, to develop and extend the writing of others. However, in some instances, activities do not provide the pupils, particularly boys, with clear enough guidance on what they need to do to accelerate their progress. Tasks are well matched to the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The adults who provide individual support for pupils carefully tailor tasks to their very specific needs.

The well-planned curriculum is broad and balanced, encouraging the pupils' interest and enjoyment. This is particularly the case in reading, where the pupils are introduced to a range of texts which are also strongly promoted through links with parents and carers. One boy explained how he 'loved reading' and had particularly enjoyed reading a poem in the role of 'the chief pirate'. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through many opportunities for collaborative work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most of the pupils behave very well. They, and the vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire, expressed few concerns about behaviour or safety. Typically, the pupils are considerate, and work and play harmoniously. In lessons, the pupils are attentive and respond well; for example, when engaged in activities to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds using the interactive whiteboard. The pupils, notably in Year 2, work without close supervision and demonstrate good levels of concentration in completing the tasks their teachers set for them.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn and play well together, both when the activities are led by adults and when the children choose the activities themselves. Throughout the school, all of the adults model the behaviour they expect from the pupils. They consistently reinforce the 'golden rules', praise good behaviour and celebrate success. The pupils are aware of various types of bullying and know who they would turn to if they were concerned or worried. Incidents of, for example, name calling are rare, but are dealt with swiftly.

The school manages the behaviour of a small number of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties well. Committed and effective adult support for these pupils, along with additional support and advice both from within the school and from a range of external services, combine to minimise disruption to learning. Steps taken by the school have helped to improve the behaviour and attendance of these pupils. The school can point to examples where improvements in behaviour have led to improved learning, progress, and attainment in reading and writing.

Most pupils attend every day unless they are ill, but a few pupils are absent for long periods. Although a range of measures are in place to discourage this, the school has not been successful in eliminating persistent absence among a very few pupils.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior team have maintained the school's good performance over several years, and successfully accommodated and modified support for the increasing proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Working closely with the governing body, they are committed to driving the school forward through a series of key priorities for improvement. The governing body frequently monitors progress towards these priorities and consistently holds the school to account for its performance. The headteacher and senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching, and identify where teachers can improve their performance. Those members of staff new to teaching are very well supported and given good opportunities for professional development. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. Since the last inspection, the teachers have developed more effective methods of teaching phonics, which have strengthened the pupils' approaches to reading and spelling, illustrating the good capacity that exists for further improvement. The progress of each pupil is carefully tracked and scrutinised in regular meetings about pupils' progress. The performance of all groups, particularly those who are potentially vulnerable, is carefully assessed. This demonstrates well the school's commitment to equality and tackling discrimination.

The headteacher and the governing body make sure that arrangements to keep the pupils safe are comprehensive and fully implemented. The governing body visits the school, not only to check that regulations are met, but also to talk to the pupils to assess their understanding of how to stay safe, for example when they are playing with toys or games that could be misused, such as skipping ropes, and to ascertain that they know what to do should they feel someone is being unkind to them.

The curriculum provides an effective range of opportunities for all groups of pupils. The teachers modify tasks to meet the needs of different abilities but occasionally miss opportunities to promote writing in a broad range of contexts. The curriculum successfully promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, most pupils have a very clear understanding of the qualities necessary for working together. Their cultural development is fostered in collaboration with parents and carers through activities which, for example, celebrate the festivals of the faiths represented in the school. The school works well with parents and carers and is constantly seeking to improve its relationship with those who do not fully support the school's expectations of, for example, attendance.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



30 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7JZ

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us during our visit to your school. I am very grateful to the pupils in Years 1 and 2 who spent some time reading to us and telling us about their learning and the activities that they are able to do at school. Some of you also said that the school provides lots of interesting things to do, and we agree. Most of you behave very well and do as your teachers ask you. This means that lessons are purposeful and you can get on with your work. The school is very caring, which helps you to feel safe and grow in confidence.

You go to a good school. The headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants are helping you to make good progress. The youngest children get off to a good start, but some of the activities they do outside could be made a bit harder for them. You do a bit better in reading and mathematics than you do in writing. I have asked the teachers to look closely for ways to make your writing even better so that you can reach higher standards. You can help too by continuing to work hard.

Most of you attend school every day unless you are poorly, but a very few children do not come to school often enough, so they do not learn as much as they could. We have asked the headteacher to do all she can to make sure that these children are only absent when they are ill.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker
Lead inspector

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