

Hertford Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114368
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	378848
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Marshall

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	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joy Whittam/Sue Seymour
Headteacher	Marcelo Staricoff
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2008
School address	Hertford Road Brighton BN1 7GF
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Marshall

Additional Inspector

Stephanie Matthews

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors spent ten hours observing teaching, which included visiting 14 class lessons and a number of smaller teaching groups. In all, 11 teachers were observed teaching. In addition, discussions were held with different groups of pupils, governors, the headteacher, staff members and parents and carers. The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' performance and progress, the school development plan, procedures for safeguarding pupils, minutes of governing body meetings, school policies and curriculum planning documents. In addition, questionnaires from 79 parents and carers, and those from members of staff, were analysed.

Information about the school

Hertford is an average-sized infant school, with a 50 place nursery. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, with a small but increasing proportion from a range of minority ethnic groups, including some who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than that found nationally in schools. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also higher than that seen nationally, including the number on school action plus or with statements of special educational needs.

The school has achieved Healthy Schools Status and Eco (Green Flag) 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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Hertford Infant and Nursery School is an outstanding school. Exceptional leadership and strong teamwork among staff have significantly improved pupils' outcomes. Consequently, pupils achieve outstandingly well in response to excellent teaching of a vibrant curriculum and the very strong promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In particular, teachers use new technologies consistently and very imaginatively to inspire learning. The school has already identified the need to make sure book-based provision is equally consistently beneficial.
- During their time at school, pupils enjoy their learning and make excellent progress. From often low starting points, by the end of Key Stage 1 they reach standards which are at least in line with those seen nationally. Reading standards have risen to above average, in response to the school's focus on improving pupils' skills in literacy.
- Teachers' infectious enthusiasm and excellent care, guidance and support inspire learning. Their skilful questioning challenges pupils and makes them think. The outstanding school curriculum is based on developing pupils' confidence and sense of curiosity in their own learning.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well and agree that they feel completely safe. The school places a strong focus on encouraging positive behaviour and this forms the backdrop for pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes to learning.
- The senior leadership team work exceptionally well together and have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This has raised the quality of all aspects of the school since the previous inspection. The rigorous management of teachers' performance and the excellent use of assessment information enable action on identified weakness to be prompt and effective, ensuring that all groups of pupils make equally strong progress.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide the same high level of stimulus in the use of books as for other aspects of the curriculum, improving their use to support research and reading for pleasure.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the school with skills and knowledge that are often well below those expected for their age. Throughout the school, all groups of pupils achieve exceptionally well and they are particularly well prepared for the next stage of their education. As the school records show, and lesson observations and scrutiny of work confirm, all pupils, regardless of their ability, make outstanding progress. This begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where effective organisation and careful assessments enable children to make exceptional progress because the richly diverse curriculum offers them independence and choice. Nursery children show increasingly mature attitudes and make great strides forward quickly. This rapid progress continues in Reception so that when pupils enter Year 1, their attainment is broadly average. This excellent start is built upon well so that by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is consistently average or above.

Pupils' standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average. They read with fluency and accuracy and can establish the meaning of unfamiliar words using clues in the text. They sound out parts of words and blend them together, showing well-developed understanding of phonics (linking sounds and letters). In mathematics, pupils' past work and work within lessons illustrate their growing confidence in number calculations and problem solving. Pupils' writing skills show use of interesting vocabulary, understanding of basic sentence structure and good levels of spelling accuracy. Throughout the school, the pupils' work on display and in their books clearly shows the excellent progress pupils make not only in basic skills, but in thinking and life skills. The 'Thinking Board' in the corridor of pupils' thoughts is an inspiration to them all.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make excellent progress. This stems from the high priority the school gives to meeting their needs. By ensuring consistent and high quality help from well-qualified teaching assistants wherever it is needed, the lower attaining pupils, and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, make very rapid progress. Any gaps between them and their peers are closed effectively.

Parents and carers expressed a high level of satisfaction in the progress their children make. Inspection evidence fully concurs with the parents' and carers' positive views.

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Quality of teaching

Almost without exception, parents and carers feel that their child is taught well. Inspectors judged teaching to be outstanding over time because it is leading directly to pupils' outstanding achievement. This is because all staff take a consistent approach to the planning and delivery of lessons. A close analysis of pupils' prior attainment, together with close tracking of their progress during their time at school, means that staff know all pupils exceptionally well and skills and knowledge are developed systematically. Regular opportunities are provided across the curriculum and in all lessons for pupils to talk about what they are learning, to develop their language and communication skills and their vocabulary, leading to particular success in supporting pupils' literacy development. This emphasis begins in the Nursery class, where their book about 'sharing' is proudly used by everyone. In Reception, this development moves on apace, whether it be a 'philosophy' lesson involving a mum and a very young baby and their place in the family, or a mock trial to determine whether it was right for Jack to steal the giant's hen.

In every lesson observed, teachers ensured pupils were clear about what they were expected to learn and how they could measure their own success. They provide pupils with interesting activities, successfully engaging them in their learning, and they are fully aware of what pupils have learnt and where they need extra support. Teachers make exceptionally good use of questioning throughout the lessons, encouraging pupils to think and learn for themselves. This is particularly evident in the teaching of phonics across the school. Teaching makes an exceptionally positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in supporting pupils in getting on well together. Teachers' excellent assessment of pupils' work is often immediate and verbal. Written marking offers helpful advice to pupils about improvement. The use of self-evaluation contributes well to pupils' learning. For instance, pupils in Year 2 worked zealously with partners to check their writing against their individual targets.

The curriculum is outstandingly well planned to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Several aspects are innovative, such as imaginative learning opportunities to use philosophy to develop high-level thinking skills and encourage original thinking. The school participates in a 'blogging' programme with schools in France, Australia and Norwich, which has a profound impact in developing pupils' team working, communication and problem-solving skills. Pupils also learn about issues of personal safety and healthy living. The school is well equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards that are used exceptionally well to promote learning. However, teachers do not always use book resources in the same consistent way so that not all opportunities for pupils to use books for book-based research or to read for pleasure are exploited. There is excellent enrichment through a range of visitors and visits, for example to local historical sites, and through the outstanding extra-curricular programme.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is outstanding. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions show that this is typical over time. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying but say there is no bullying of any description in the school as they are all friends. They are confident that if any issues or concerns around bullying did arise, they would be dealt with swiftly and sensitively. As one Year 2 pupil observed in discussion, 'We know better than that because we are ready to help each other.' The school has devised a curriculum that focuses strongly on pupils working with others. As a result, throughout the school, pupils are enthusiastic learners. They make an exceptional contribution to their own learning. Attendance is above average as pupils enjoy all their time at school. The curriculum also promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.

Almost all parents and carers report that standards of behaviour in the school are high and they all agree that their children are kept safe at all times. Pupils, too, agree. They show very caring attitudes to each other and know there is always someone they can turn to in moments of difficulty, either academic or personal. They acquire an extremely good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Pupils were keen to show how much they enjoy the responsibility of the school council or team captains. The school and ECO councils are justifiably proud of the input they have made to influence changes.

Leadership and management

The headteacher gives the school a very clear direction. The 'I Can – We Can' school motto demonstrates whole-school commitment to do the best for the pupils, and reflects the strength of relationships and the staff's dedication to their work. All members of the school community demonstrate excellent teamwork. The governing body has an excellent understanding of the school's many strengths and few areas for development. They offer strong challenge and support to the school. The wide range of partnerships provides consistent support for pupils' well-being, and for their learning, through links with external agencies. Excellent attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure the highest quality of safeguarding for the pupils.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly. The excellent curriculum focuses on key areas of learning and the range of extra-curricular clubs is clearly enjoyed by the pupils. Pupils are proud of their work that has helped the school achieve Healthy Schools Status and their Green Flag ECO award. School self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The school development plan focuses clearly on raising standards and improving teaching even further. Performance management is rigorous. It leads to focused staff training and has resulted in improvements in all aspects of the school. The consistently clear vision of all involved in the school, pupils' enhanced progress, and the commitment of all staff and governors indicate the school's continuing capacity to improve further.

School leaders are deeply committed to the promotion of equal opportunities. They

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have ensured excellent participation by pupils who may be vulnerable, and outstanding academic performance by all groups. All the staff are particularly effective in tackling discrimination should it occur and in successfully endeavouring to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and across all aspects of the school's work.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.



2 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hertford Infant and Nursery School, Brighton BN1 7GF

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to the school recently. We did enjoy our visit. Yours is an outstanding school with many strengths, and we agree with what you told us – it is a really fun place to learn. Here is a list of some of the super things we found.

- You all make excellent progress in your learning.
- You behave extremely well, get along with each other and feel safe in school.
- You really enjoy school because there are plenty of exciting things for you to do both in school and on visits and in clubs.
- The school looks after you extremely well and shows you how to improve your work.
- The headteacher and staff manage the school exceptionally well.

Even in outstanding schools, there are ways of getting better. We have asked your headteacher and staff to look at giving you even more help to use books for research and reading for pleasure, drawing your attention to all the books in the school, as well as they do everything else.

You can help by thinking about how you can use books even more frequently to help you learn so that you can all make the best possible progress in your learning.

Yours sincerely

David Marshall
Lead inspector

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