

Hamstel Infant School and Nursery

Hamstel Road, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 4PQ

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children have a successful start to school in Nursery and Reception. They make good progress, which continues through Years 1 and 2.
- Teaching is typically good, and there are some examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers and teaching assistants clearly show high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Teachers set demanding tasks that are well suited to pupils' abilities and learning needs.
- Pupils who have specific learning and behavioural needs benefit from good individual guidance and support.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. In some lessons, their attitudes to learning and behaviour are outstanding.
- Pupils feel safe and very well cared for by staff.
- The headteacher provides strong leadership and successfully drives improvement.
- Other key leaders also make a valuable contribution to raising achievement and improving teaching.
- Pupils enjoy an interesting range of learning activities, and outdoor learning is a particular strength.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers do not always make the most of opportunities to extend pupils' vocabulary and speaking skills.
- Marking does not always clearly show pupils how to improve their work.
- Learning is sometimes directed too much by the teacher, so pupils have insufficient opportunities to plan and organise their own work.
- Although it has improved recently, attendance is generally below average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons, some of which were seen together with the headteacher and leader of English.
- They held discussions with the headteacher, staff, parents, representatives of the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 63 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and the findings of the school’s own parental survey.
- Responses to an inspection questionnaire from 64 staff were analysed.
- The inspectors examined school policies, information about pupils’ attainment and progress, teachers’ planning of learning, pupils’ work and the school’s planning for improvement.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Richmond	Additional Inspector
Philip Scull	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized infant school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- An above-average proportion of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals, and those with a parent in the services.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching and learning outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all staff make the most of every opportunity to extend pupils' vocabulary and speaking skills
 - marking consistently provides clear feedback and guidance on how pupils can improve their learning
 - pupils are routinely given opportunities to organise their own learning and to learn independently.
- Extend the range of strategies to promote and maintain good attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills lower than those typically expected for their age, particularly their communication, language and social skills. In Nursery and Reception, children make good progress in all the areas of learning because of good teaching and the interesting range of activities provided.
- Good progress continues through Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Year 2, attainment is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the well-chosen and specific support they receive.
- In 2012, the Year 2 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained similar standards to the other pupils in mathematics and writing. They were four months behind the others in reading. More recent information shows that pupils supported by the pupil premium are now making faster progress in reading. The school is effectively narrowing the gap in attainment between the two groups, and they are all making good progress.
- The more-able pupils make good progress because they are set challenging and demanding activities. Just occasionally in lessons, they are not given sufficient opportunities to plan and organise their own learning and work.
- In most lessons pupils make good progress in speaking and listening because of the strong emphasis that teachers place on these skills. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend pupils' vocabulary and to enable them to discuss their learning in depth.
- In reading, pupils are benefiting from a new reading and writing scheme. They make good progress in acquiring essential reading skills. Pupils enjoy reading the wide range of books on offer at school, although reading at home is less well established with some pupils.
- Positive steps have been taken to raise pupils' achievement in writing, especially for boys, whose attainment has trailed behind that of the girls. In Year 1, pupils wrote interesting recounts of their visit to Mountfitchet Castle. They described the day's experience in order and provided interesting information about life in the past. Year 2 wrote vivid descriptions of characters with an emphasis on their appearance and personality.
- Pupils make good progress in acquiring and applying mathematical skills. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils made outstanding progress in solving money problems because tasks were suitably demanding. Pupils explained clearly, using mathematical language, how they solved the problems.

The quality of teaching

is good

- All groups of pupils are making good progress because of the good teaching and effective support they receive. Pupils are expected to do their best, and they respond well to the high expectations conveyed by teachers and support staff.
- Teachers successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They create a positive classroom climate for pupils to learn in and establish good relationships. As a

result, pupils are attentive, cooperative and learn well together.

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children are provided with an interesting range of indoor and outdoor activities. There are good opportunities for children to explore and learn independently. Children also receive well-focused teaching from adults.
- Teachers make effective use of the information about pupils' attainment to plan their teaching and to match tasks to pupils' different abilities. As a result, pupils are suitably challenged and their interest is sustained. They make good gains in acquiring knowledge and deepening their understanding.
- Essential reading skills, including phonics (letters and the sounds they make), are effectively taught through a regular and well-structured programme. Pupils are effectively organised into groups of similar levels of reading, and activities are well suited to their attainment. Learning proceeds at a brisk pace and pupils make good progress.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective. Activities and support are closely suited to pupils' learning needs. Teaching assistants are used to good effect in guiding and supporting pupils' learning. In the special facilities such as the 'Rainbow Room' and 'Nurture Room' staff provide carefully chosen support to make sure pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties make good progress.
- In most lessons, pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted well. For example, in a highly effective Year 2 lesson, pupils were fully engaged in the story of 'Gregory Cool' on holiday in Tobago. The teacher was a fine role model for reading and speech. Her animation, expression and enthusiasm motivated the pupils. Through skilful questioning pupils rapidly acquired new vocabulary and new knowledge and understanding about life in the Caribbean. Pupils used their new learning to articulately express their opinions and views about the story.
- In a few lessons, teachers miss opportunities to extend pupils' vocabulary and do not provide the chance for pupils to discuss their learning in pairs or small groups.
- Occasionally, pupils' learning and the way they present their work are directed by the teacher. For example, pupils complete charts and tables provided by the teacher, rather than deciding how best they might organise and present their work themselves.
- In the best practice, teachers' marking acknowledges and praises pupils' good work. Constructive comments help to move pupils' learning on to the next stage. This good practice is not happening in all classes. Pupils are not always given clear guidance on how to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Leaders and staff work consistently well together to promote good behaviour and to ensure that pupils are safe at school. Pupils feel safe and very well looked after.
 - Children in the Nursery classes settle well into the school because of the warm and positive relationships established with adults. Children and parents benefit from the school's extremely thorough induction arrangements. Children enjoy the activities provided as they learn and play together.
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- Pupils show enthusiasm and interest in their learning. They were keen to tell the inspectors, 'I like reading,' 'We learn more and more,' and 'I like doing lots of writing.' Pupils enjoy their learning in lessons and the wide range of additional activities and clubs on offer.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. In a few lessons in Years 1 and 2, pupils' attitudes and their conduct were exemplary. The school's clear and thorough records of incidents show that behaviour is typically good over time. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils have clear understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take, including name-calling, hurting people's feelings and physical bullying. Pupils informed the inspectors that there is a 'little bit of bullying' but it is always sorted out by the adults.
- Promoting good attendance presents a challenge for the school because a few families are not fully supporting its drive to raise attendance. Attendance has improved recently from below-average levels. These improvements have not yet been sustained over time.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. The headteacher provides very good leadership and educational direction for the school.
 - Key leaders, including the deputy headteacher and leaders of English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage all play an effective role in checking performance and improving their areas of responsibility.
 - The relatively recently appointed special needs coordinator and the manager for pupils well-being bring good experience to their posts. They have sharpened assessment of pupils' needs, and carefully check the progress of pupils receiving support. Where actions do not lead to marked improvement, other approaches are tried.
 - The headteacher and key leaders have established a positive, professional culture among the staff. As a result, staff work well in striving to do the very best for pupils and their families.
 - The development of teaching receives good attention. Senior leaders observe classroom practice and provide constructive feedback to teachers. There are effective procedures for appraising staff performance and developing their professional skills. Targets to improve performance and training are linked well to school priorities. For example, there has been considerable training provided to strengthen the teaching of reading and writing. This has had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Leaders and staff are striving to increase the amount of outstanding teaching.
 - The local authority has a good, accurate understanding of the school's performance and has confidence in its ability to maintain and build on its work. The school's support partner makes a valuable contribution to its improvement. The headteacher is well regarded in the area and her expertise is used to support other schools.
 - An interesting range of learning activities are provided to promote good achievement. The outdoor learning facilities, including the outdoor classroom and natural area, are used particularly well. An indoor swimming pool means that most pupils are competent swimmers by the time they leave.
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- All pupils have access to the full range of activities provided, and the staff strive to ensure that different groups of pupils all do as well as they can. Discrimination is not tolerated.
 - Pupil premium funding has been properly planned and allocated. Additional support and new learning materials have been provided to help eligible pupils and accelerate their progress.
 - Productive partnerships have been formed with other agencies and organisations. For example, there is a close relationship with the Children’s Centre and links with the adjoining junior school have been strengthened.
 - The vast majority of parents are rightly pleased with the care and education provided for their children. They are particularly pleased with safety, how well the children are looked after, their children’s progress, teaching and leadership and management.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are enthusiastic and bring a broad range of experience and skills to benefit the school. They have a clear overview of pupils’ attainment and progress and how these compare to schools nationally. Governors also have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching. This clear knowledge enables them to challenge senior leaders and hold the school to account. Governors are up to date with recent requirements relating to the management of staff performance, and ensure that promotion and pay rises are linked to the progress that pupils make. They manage finances well, and check how effectively the pupil premium is spent by looking at how well eligible pupils are progressing. Governors attend appropriate training courses to increase their effectiveness. They ensure that all safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114771
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	412637

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

Type of school	Infant and nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Willis
Headteacher	Lisa Clark
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2008
Telephone number	01702 468461
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