



# Highfields Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114769  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 279445  
**Inspection dates** 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Mike Sutton LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Colchester Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		CO11 2BN
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01206392223
<b>Number on roll</b>	261	<b>Fax number</b>	01206 395485
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr.Malcolm Gentry
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Hilary Cook

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 5 October 2005 - 6 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 279445
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is in the town of Manningtree in Essex and is of average size. The children come largely from the immediate area which is broadly average in terms of social deprivation. There are very few children from minority ethnic backgrounds and none is learning English as an additional language. Fewer than average numbers of children join or leave during the school year. When the children start in the reception class their skills and knowledge are about the same as typically found amongst children of this age. There are about the same proportion of children with learning difficulties and disabilities<sup>1</sup> as found in most schools. Total replacement of the old school buildings was undertaken three years ago under a public private partnership arrangement. The new building is a bright and attractive working environment set in very pleasant grounds overlooking the River Stour valley.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

This is an effective school which gives satisfactory value for money. The school's view is that it is better than this. Although the inspectors agree with the school's view in several areas of its work, there are some areas where children could do better than they currently do, particularly in writing and science. The personal development of the children is outstanding, particularly their behaviour and the ways in which they engage with the local community. The school works very well with outside agencies and with parents to do the best for the children. Children make satisfactory progress and reach standards which are in line with those expected by the time they leave Year six. In the reception class and Years one and two progress is good and standards are above average. There have been significant and sustained improvements in standards by the end of Year two in the last few years but this has not been matched with such consistent improvement at the end of Year six. Reading is strong throughout the school as is writing in Years one and two. But in Years three to six, writing skills vary too much and standards in science have remained at an average level for several years because the children do too little practical work. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There are enormous strengths in the ways in which all children are welcomed, valued and enabled to develop their personal qualities to the full. However, although prepared to take tough decisions over some matters, the school leaders have not yet been fully effective in raising the satisfactory teaching to a consistently good level. The staff know their children well but the school does not have secure enough methods for checking how much progress children are making. The school has made good progress on the issues identified in the last inspection and has the capacity to continue to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

To improve standards further the school should: -continue to improve the ways it checks how well children are doing and make better use of this information in setting goals for itself; -ensure teachers know what they must do to improve their teaching; -improve standards in science for the older age children by lifting the quality and quantity of practical work which they undertake; -improve the standards in writing by grasping every opportunity for children to use their writing skills in other subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

When they start school most of the children have knowledge and skills that are in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress in the reception class and by the time they move into Year one many can do more than is normally expected at that age. Children of all abilities make good progress in Years one and two and reach standards which are above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress and achieve as well as they reasonably can. In Years three to six the children make satisfactory

progress in English, particularly in their reading. By the time they move to secondary school their standards in recent years, have been around the national average. Progress is better in mathematics where standards are consistently just above average by the end of Year six. Preliminary results from the national tests for the school indicate that standards in writing fell in 2005, but evidence from the inspection confirms the school's view that the present Year six children are on line to do better. Writing remains an area where standards vary too much. Standards in science throughout the school have remained steady and could be improved through a greater focus on practical investigation and enquiry work and better knowledge of what children have understood and can do.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The children's personal development and well-being are outstanding. This reflects the way in which everyone in the school puts the care, development and well-being of the children to the fore. Spiritual, social and cultural development are good and moral development is outstanding. All the children learn to be part of a caring community and to be aware of and provide support to those who need it. For example, the ways in which the older children enjoy helping the youngest is a very significant attribute. The abhorrence of racism which Year six children expressed shows a mature approach to the challenges faced in growing up. Behaviour is excellent both in the classroom and around the school. Children work and play well together without feeling inhibited. They say there are very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour and any that occur are quickly and effectively dealt with. Attendance is above average reflecting the children's enjoyment of school and all it provides. The children learn about staying safe and have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. This is reinforced through the work they do in science and the general approach the school takes to healthy eating and encouraging exercise through physical activities. Children make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider local community. The school council is making a valuable input with ideas on how to improve the school further. The children take every opportunity to show what they have learned in music by performing for others and enter into the spirit of local events by participating, for example, in carnivals and raising money for charities. They learn the basic skills necessary to succeed in life. They have an outward looking perspective through learning from the people they meet on educational visits or who visit the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning in the school is satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching but there is too much variation from class to class and from subject to subject. Not enough teaching is really good or outstanding. The school's self evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is too generous. More needs to be

done to identify how to make the satisfactory teaching even better and to raise standards further. Where the teaching is at its best the teachers expect a lot of the children. They involve them in evaluating their own work and make sure they know what they need to do to improve. In these lessons the teachers find ways to make sure every child is actively involved. For example, in a literacy lesson the teacher made very good use of small whiteboards and talking in pairs to help the class improve the quality of some simple sentences. In these lessons the children work hard, enjoy their learning and get a strong sense of achievement from their efforts. Where the teaching is only satisfactory the pace of lessons is too slow and the tasks set for the class are less imaginative or demanding and often rely too heavily on worksheets. This is evident in work in science, history and geography and it reduces the opportunities for pupils to use and to develop their writing skills. The school has been very successful in providing training that has improved the contribution which teaching assistants make. They are now well deployed and work in close partnership with teachers to help children of all abilities. The teachers are making good use of the new information and communication technology suite to develop children's computer skills and knowledge. The teachers are quickly coming to terms with the recently introduced electronic whiteboards and are already starting to use them well.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The range of activities provided by the school is broad and balanced and meets all legal requirements. The children enjoy the work they are given to do and this is enriched by a range of special events, educational visits and visitors to the school. Occasions such as the Victorian Day and the Year 5 field trip to Norfolk bring life and excitement to the subjects being studied and make a strong contribution to the social and cultural development of the children. The school gives a high profile to music. The children are enthusiastic about playing instruments and participate fully in various school bands and the choir. The children and parents have been consulted on what clubs they would like to see and as a result the school offers a very wide range of activities beyond the school day. These events significantly enhance the educational experience offered by the school and provide something for everyone.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support for children is good overall. The quality of care is outstanding. Every person working at the school has the very best interests of the children at heart and goes out of their way to ensure they are safe and happy in school. The children all report that they can speak to the staff whenever they have a problem and that they feel very strongly that they will be listened to and action will be taken if necessary. The school is very inclusive and willingly makes changes to the organisation of the day to meet the particular needs of individuals. The staff are well trained and all necessary policies and procedures to keep the children safe are very securely in place. The breakfast club offers good morning care for a group of children

who appreciate the chance to make a positive start to the day. The way in which the teachers keep records of the progress the children are making is not consistent enough. This information is not always used to set work at the right level for all children in each group or class. This is one of the key reasons why children's progress in Years three to six is only satisfactory.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has done an outstanding job in bringing together the elements of a new school. The high level of commitment to making the school fully inclusive is seen in the 'extra mile' to which she helps everyone go to ensure all children develop as fully as they can as young people. This is why children's personal development is so good. The commitment to working with children, parents and governors is very strong. The school consults, listens and acts on the information it gathers. Parents express strong support and confidence in the school. The school has a good knowledge of where its strengths and weaknesses lie and key subject managers understand the issues. But key leaders have not yet been fully effective in bringing about improvement. Standards in science have remained static for too long and in writing they fluctuate too much because children do not use or develop their skills sufficiently. Checking on children's progress has relied on a variety of methods from which a coherent overall view of progress has been hard to establish. Consequently the school then has an unreliable basis for judging progress, for example, from the start to the end of reception. The school has started to address the main issues. For example, it is changing its method for looking at the skills of young children starting in the reception class. But until the improvements planned have a stronger impact on standards and progress particularly for the older children, leadership and management cannot be judged better than satisfactory. The governors have been instrumental in working with the headteacher to plan and secure the new buildings. They are imaginative and forward thinking, helping to ensure the most cost effective solutions as the school develops. They have ensured sound management of finances to enable the school to cope with the fall in numbers on roll whilst still taking on board the need to provide key staff with the time to undertake their management tasks. They have helped the school tackle some of the issues it faces and now need to focus more on raising standards still further. The school has shown in the past that it can improve and undoubtedly has the capacity to do so still.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the help you gave to all the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We really appreciated your friendliness and politeness and the way you helped look after us. What you told us about your school was very helpful. We would now like to tell you what we think. You told us that you enjoy school and that you feel safe and well cared for. We couldn't agree more. Mrs. Cook and all her staff do an outstanding job of making you all feel welcome, happy and safe. We think you behave extremely well and are very good at working together and helping one another. You are all developing very mature attitudes and we think that by the time you leave Year six you will be well prepared for your next school. You now have a lovely new building and grounds thanks to the enormous amount of work that Mrs Cook and her governors have put in over the last few years. The teachers work very hard to help you learn and most of you are making steady progress. Your reading is very good. We were also very impressed with all the other things you do, particularly the clubs and the music activities. But every school wants to do still better and we have suggested a few things that we would like your teachers to do which will help you learn even more. We think they need to find out a bit more about how well you are learning. We would like to see you do some more practical work in science and use your writing skills as often as possible. We feel absolutely sure that everyone at the school will continue to work hard to help you learn, grow and develop as individuals. Continue to work hard and good luck for the future.