



# Hilltop Infant School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 114886  
**LEA** ESSEX LEA  
**Inspection number** 279465  
**Inspection dates** 10 October 2005 to 11 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mrs. Marina Gough LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Hill Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community		SS11 8LT
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 7		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01268762531
<b>Number on roll</b>	221	<b>Fax number</b>	01268570217
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr. David Harwood
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Celia Ebrahimi

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 7	<b>Inspection dates</b> 10 October 2005 - 11 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 279465
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

## Description of the school

Hilltop Infant School is situated in the centre of a large housing estate and shares a site with its partner junior school. All children start school in September, the older ones attending full-time and the younger ones on a part-time basis until January, from when they attend full-time. Their pre-school experience is wide and varied. When they start school children are working at the level expected for their age in most areas of learning, although a number of children have poor social and language skills. Only a very small number of children are eligible for free school meals, and the socio-economic circumstances of most children are favourable. The level of children with special educational needs is broadly average. The vast majority of children are of white ethnicity and only one child is currently at an early stage of learning English. The school has been awarded the intermediate award for healthy schools and is now working towards the advanced level.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding school that has made significant progress since its last inspection. It is very well placed for continued and further development, and gives excellent value for money. The headteacher, staff and governing body know the school very well and have made an honest and accurate appraisal of its strengths and weaknesses that closely reflects the inspection findings. The quality of education for children in the reception classes is outstanding. As a result, children of all abilities make rapid progress and attain standards that are higher than expected for their age across many areas of learning. Children aged 5 to 7 make good progress, and attain standards that are consistently well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school places strong emphasis on the children using and applying key skills of literacy and numeracy in their work in other areas. It does not provide enough opportunities for children to use information and communication technology as a tool for learning. Teaching is a strength of the school and is outstanding. Relationships between adults and children are exceptionally good and do much to contribute to the children's enthusiasm for learning. Children are well behaved and are very keen to learn. The school provides a wide range of exciting activities for the children, but offers only a small number of after-school and lunchtime clubs. The school has an outstanding relationship with its local partner schools and draws extensively on its very strong community links to widen and enhance the children's education. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher, staff and governors share the same clear vision for the school's future development, and are innovative, reflective and keen to keep improving the school.

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

As outlined in the school improvement plan, the school should: - provide more opportunities for children to use information and communication technology to support their learning; - extend the range of out-of-school clubs.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

In the reception classes the children's starting point is broadly average, although a significant number of children have poorly developed language and social skills when they start school. Children make outstanding progress in their first year in school, and by the end of the Foundation Stage, their attainment is higher than expected for their age in most areas of learning. Standards at the end of Year 2 are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, and have been at this high level for a number of years. Children of all abilities make excellent progress. Topic work shows outstanding evidence of the way in which the children use key skills of literacy and numeracy to support their learning, and the breadth of the children's knowledge across a wide range of subjects. The children's problem-solving skills are very well developed for their age, and they tackle new learning methodically and confidently. Although

standards in information and communication technology are satisfactory, the children do not make enough use of computers to support their learning in other subjects, and this is an aspect of learning that the school has rightly identified as needing further development.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development is outstanding. Children's attitudes and behaviour are exemplary and neither bullying nor racism is a problem. Children are well mannered and polite. They work hard in lessons and agree that 'learning is fun'. Throughout the school children are keen to come to school and attendance is good. It would be even better if a significant number of parents did not withdraw their children for holidays during term time. The school very actively promotes healthy eating, and ensures that the children are safe both in and out of school. The school is part of the 'Safer Journeys to School' project and three walking buses are organised by parents helping to promote a healthy lifestyle. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is very well fostered through a broad range of activities including a wide range of visitors, visits and involvement in projects with the Essex Dance Theatre and Artis, a performing arts group. Children are keen to support those less fortunate than themselves. In the reception classes, great emphasis is placed on the development of personal, social and emotional skills, an area that is weak for many children when they start school. The children make exceptional progress in this area of their learning so that they are keen and ready learners when they join Year 1.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Teaching and learning are outstanding across the school. Teachers match work very well to the individual needs of children and use questions very effectively to check and extend the children's understanding. Where teaching is at its best, the children are given thinking time so that they can consider their answers. Activities are carefully explained so that the children know exactly what is expected of them, and imaginative resources are used very well to enhance learning. Teachers provide a very good range of practical activities to ensure that the children really understand new ideas. Lessons are often exciting and stimulating, such as the Year 2 lesson where children were making and eating healthy sandwiches. Outstanding relationships between children and adults ensure that the children are confident about their learning and unafraid of making mistakes. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to lessons and provide additional support, in an unobtrusive and sensitive way, for children who have difficulties. Teachers regularly assess what the children know and can do, and use this information very effectively to plan the next steps of children's learning. Teachers encourage children to comment on their own learning, and discussion with Year 2 children shows that they know the targets they are aiming for next.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good overall. It is outstanding in the Foundation Stage where there is an exceptionally good balance of activities that the children direct themselves and those that are led by an adult. Since the last inspection the school has imaginatively developed the curriculum for children in Years 1 and 2. Subjects are now linked together around topics or themes, so that the children have a real and meaningful context for their learning. This curriculum is in the early stages of implementation and has therefore not yet been fully evaluated by the school. However, the early signs are encouraging, and the children certainly enjoy the many stimulating and exciting activities that are provided. The curriculum is enriched and enhanced by a wide range of visits and visiting speakers. The school has a very good programme for fostering the children's personal, social and health education and citizenship, which makes a significant contribution to their personal development. The club for technology, in which pupils work with a local engineering company, is an outstanding example of how the school helps to raise the children's economic awareness. However, the school has taken on board the parents' view that there is not a wide enough range of after school clubs and is taking suitable action to introduce more.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Parents are very positive about the way in which the school care for, guides and supports their children. Relationships between adults and children are extremely warm, and children are confident about approaching any adult to discuss a problem or to share their news. All children are included in the full range of school activities, and the school works very closely with individual children and their families where there are difficulties. The school's partnership with parents is very good, and as a result, problems and concerns are quickly addressed. There are outstanding policies and procedures in place for health, safety and child protection, all of which are fully reflected in practice, and well-known by staff. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and take a strong lead in ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all children. The school has very high academic expectations, but is keen for all children to enjoy their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher provides a very strong lead for staff and governors, and sets clear and high expectations. Crucial decisions are reached through a rigorous process of consultation, and the views of parents, children and members of the local community are valued and genuinely considered. The headteacher is very proactive in raising funding for new initiatives, and in involving external agencies in projects which enhance and extend the children's learning. The monitoring of the school's work is very thorough and has led to staff

gaining a clear insight into what is working well and a good awareness of what still needs further development. The school improvement plan is a very good working document that reflects the contribution of all stakeholders. The headteacher, staff and governors have a very secure knowledge of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses, and their own evaluation of the school's life and work closely reflects the inspection findings. The school's finances are very well monitored and managed so that spending and income are closely aligned. The school is very well placed for continued improvement.

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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>	1	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	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	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	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	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	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1	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>	1	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>	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	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**

You probably remember that Mr Naylor and I recently visited your school. We were very pleased with what we saw, and would like to share some of the things we found out with you. We think that your school is excellent because: - you work hard and do very well in reading, writing and mathematics; - teachers go to a lot of trouble to make your lessons fun, and make sure that work is not too easy or too hard; - you are well behaved in lessons and at playtimes and mostly get on well with one another - if there are any problems you know that you can go to any adult for help; - there are many exciting activities for you to enjoy; - you listen well in lessons and are keen to answer questions and to do your best; - your school is a very safe place, and your teachers and the governors encourage you to be healthy; - the Safer Journeys idea is excellent and means that you are safe coming to school, and that you get plenty of extra exercise; - Mrs Ebrahimi is an excellent headteacher who gets on well with the staff and your parents, and is someone you all like very much. There are one or two things that could be done to make your school even better. We have suggested to Mrs Ebrahimi that:- - she provides more clubs for you at lunchtime and after school; - you use the computers more in lessons.