

Old Heath Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114710
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290006
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Francis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Polley
Headteacher	Mr Jeremy Hallum
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2002
School address	Old Heath Road Colchester Essex CO2 8DD
Telephone number	01206 794334
Fax number	01206 790563

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school which serves a diverse area. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. There are a small number of pupils from ethnic groups other than White British but only a few of these, recently admitted, are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is average. Attainment on entry into the Reception class is below that found normally, particularly in children's personal, social and emotional development.

The school has a 'Healthy Schools Award'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives its pupils the skills they need not only for their future education but also life beyond school. The exceptionally high level of parental agreement with all the positive statements in the questionnaire indicates that this was also the opinion of almost every parent.

Good leadership and management at all levels has refined procedures and put in place effective systems to monitor the quality of the school's work. All of these have led to improvements in many areas. The school's own evaluation of its performance gives an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. All the issues identified for development feed through into a well constructed improvement plan. A weakness is that it lacks sufficiently clear and measurable success criteria to enable senior leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of initiatives effectively. A lively and varied curriculum, linked to consistently good teaching, leads to all pupils achieving well and making good progress in their learning. Children get a super start in the Foundation Stage. While not all of them attain all the early learning goals by the time they move into Year 1, they make outstanding progress in their personal development and in improving their writing skills. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils have made much better progress than would normally have been expected and achieve above average standards.

Good attention is also given to pupils' personal development. Pupils develop good attitudes to work, enjoy school and behave well. They form strong relationships and feel secure in the knowledge that they will be well supported if they have any concerns. The provision for the care of pupils, ensuring their safety, and supporting and guiding their academic and emotional needs is good. Pupils understand the need for healthy lifestyles and how they can keep themselves safe and free from any form of harassment. Accurate target setting and good tracking of pupils' progress enable teachers to provide additional support quickly where it is needed. However, there are weaknesses in relation to addressing some aspects of day-to-day improvement. Teachers do not always have clear, measurable lesson objectives or use marking to ensure pupils understand and address the errors they have made.

There have been many improvements since the last time the school was inspected and as the rate of improvement continues to gain momentum, it demonstrates a good capacity for future development. Linking this to the improvements in standards and the effective systems for maintaining good quality provision, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Identify measurable criteria in the school's improvement plan that will enable the success of initiatives to be more accurately monitored and evaluated.
- Ensure teachers follow up their marking, using it to help pupils address the recurring errors they make.
- Make the desired learning outcomes in teachers' lesson planning clearer so that teachers and pupils can more easily judge how successful they have been in achieving these.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Regular monitoring and support by the school's leadership have led to improvements in teaching and learning since the last inspection. As a consequence, standards have improved steadily.

Children in Reception get a good start to their schooling and make good progress towards the early learning goals. They make exceptional progress in some aspects, in particular writing and personal development. Most, but not all children reach the expected level in all areas by the time they move into Year 1. Pupils continue to achieve well and make good progress and, by the ages of 7 and 11, the majority reach or exceed the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The trend over the last few years' demonstrates that pupils have made much better progress than similar pupils in other schools, especially the more able. Girls did particularly well in the 2006 tests when their performance at Year 6 was quite exceptional. Pupils who have learning difficulties, and those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, achieve well against their personal targets. Inspection evidence confirms that current standards show a similar profile of achievement for all groups, and changes to teaching and the curriculum mean boys are now achieving more highly than they did in the past.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This is a real strength of the school given the good level of care and guidance seen right from children's entry into school. The school is a calm and welcoming place. Behaviour is good and pupils are confident in adults' response to any issue that might arise. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is well supported through a wide range of approaches to developing pupils' personal, social and health education and by celebrating cultural diversity. This is complemented by the good contribution pupils' make to many aspects of school life. They make good use of the opportunities presented by the school. Pupils take pride in, for example, representing others at the school council meetings, running the healthy tuck shop, or being 'playground buddies'. The school council contributes well to the smooth running of the school. However, pupils' involvement with the wider community, while satisfactory, is not as well developed as other aspects. Almost all pupils enjoy school, find their lessons exciting and are very enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities available. With the efforts the school has made, attendance has improved and is now broadly average. Pupils' attitudes to learning and standards attained in basic skills provide a firm base for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and foster very good relationships in the classrooms between pupils and with adults. Good planning, effective use of a wide variety of good resources and a stimulating range of teaching methods combine to motivate pupils and engage their interest. All these factors create an environment in which the pupils are ready to learn and contribute to the good pace in lessons, leading to good learning. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties. There are, however, some inconsistencies, for example, in assessing pupils' short-term progress, whether through a measurable lesson objective or correcting errors identified when marking pupils' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides good opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties, to progress and perform well. Gifted and talented pupils benefit from personalised extension activities but a number of initiatives that are still being developed and have yet to become embedded. A particular strength is the skills-based approach through carefully chosen themes so that the pupils do not see individual subjects as separate parts of learning. A good enrichment programme supports the regular taught curriculum with a variety of events. Each term there are themed weeks, visits and a good range of visitors to the school. Regular extra-curricular activities are varied and provide for pupils' wide ranging interests. These activities are popular and many support the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The detailed arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils reflect the school's high priority for the safety and well being of all. The school has a good system to check on how much progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' performance in these subjects is monitored and evaluated well by managers at all levels to set suitable long-term targets for improvement. Thorough assessment procedures are used well to provide for a wide range of all pupils' learning needs. These have seen improvements in the performance of boys. The pupils often assess their own work and that of their peers. Many pupils know their targets and understand what they need to do to move on to the next level in their work. However, there are some weaknesses in addressing short-term progress. Comments made in marking pupils' work do not always give them a clear indication of how they can improve and often there is no indication that this has been followed up by either the pupil or the teacher. Equality of opportunity is actively and successfully promoted. The special educational needs coordinator has put in place good procedures for identifying and supporting pupils with learning difficulties. Individual targets and secure assessment systems help ensure these pupils make good progress. Similar procedures are in place for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. As a result, all pupils are respected and given suitable opportunities to achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has conveyed this well to the rest of the staff and the governors. The good structures in place and strong leadership team are moving the school forward. Self-evaluation is accurate, honest and based on a good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which successfully feed into the school's improvement plan. However, the success criteria in the plan are too general to allow them to be monitored effectively or give a clear indication of any impact they have made. Finances are well managed and resources are used efficiently and effectively to secure good value for money. Governors know the school well and are very supportive. The governing body is actively involved in the school and effective in discharging its responsibilities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Old Heath Primary School, Colchester, CO2 8DD

You will remember that Mrs Pentlow and I visited your school a little while ago. We want to thank you for making us welcome. We were pleased that those of you we talked with were so keen on school and wanted to share your work and ideas. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

Most of you enjoy school, work hard and try your best. The work we saw in your books show that you are improving all the time, although some of you do need to write more neatly. You told us that your lessons were interesting and in the classrooms we visited we would certainly agree with you. You also told us that everyone in school gets on well and we can see this in the way you work and play together. We thought you behaved really well. We also like the way the school council works to improve your school.

Most of you know about the targets you are working towards and what you need to do to get better. To help you get even better we have asked your teachers to make sure that tell you exactly what you are going to learn at the beginning of lessons and when they mark your work they help you to correct some of the mistakes you often make. You can help here by making sure you take notice of what your teachers say you need to work on. One other thing we have asked Mr Hallum to do is to make sure that, when the school's leaders are planning what the school needs to do to get better, they make sure they can check easily on how well they have done.

John Francis

Lead Inspector