



Earls Hall Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114720
Local Authority SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number 290009
Inspection date 30 January 2007
Reporting inspector Helen Ranger

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Carlton Avenue
School category	Community		Westcliff-on-Sea
Age range of pupils	7-11		Essex SS0 0QN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702 333360
Number on roll (school)	360	Fax number	01702 436062
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs A Ham
		Headteacher	Mr A Eastwood
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over one day.

Description of the school

This larger than average school is oversubscribed and admits pupils from a wide area. Pupils start in Year 3 with standards that are at least average, and sometimes above. About 10% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small number are learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average but an average number of pupils has a statement of special educational need. The school holds the Learning for All, Healthy Schools and ActiveMark awards. There have been a considerable number of staff changes in the past three years, including the appointments of the headteacher, deputy head and several senior teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Earls Hall Junior is a good school with some outstanding features and a few areas for further improvement. The school has an accurate view of its own current effectiveness, based on its good systems for establishing how well its pupils are doing. Academic standards have risen well in the past two years. This is because of the headteacher's exceptionally clear view of what needs to be done for pupils to fulfil their potential. The headteacher is supported extremely well by his deputy and this strong senior team has successfully enabled the school to develop its provision for pupils.

Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good. The school's results in the Year 6 national tests had dipped in 2003 and 2004 but have risen well since. Pupils make good progress as they move through the key stage and reach above average standards by Year 6. In English, their reading is better than their writing. Improving writing is rightly a current focus and teachers are working hard to plan interesting activities in all subjects to motivate pupils to write.

The good teaching and learning are regularly monitored and improved by senior staff. Much work has been done to extend the ways pupils' progress is checked and measured. These systems are ensuring that pupils do well in each year group and efficiently build on important knowledge and skills, especially in English and mathematics. They have not been extended to other areas in the same detail and this is an area for further improvement that the school has already identified. The quality of lessons, while good overall, varies from satisfactory to outstanding. For the school to achieve its ambition to improve further, teaching needs to be at least good in an even higher proportion of lessons. Good additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English helps these pupils to take a full part in lessons and make good progress.

The effective teaching delivers an interesting and varied curriculum, which is enriched very well by a very wide range of clubs, visits and sports. There is also good support for personal, social and health education. This coupled, with good care, guidance and support, results in pupils' overall personal development being good. Their behaviour is first rate. They are adopting safe and healthy lifestyles, most apparent in their high levels of understanding of personal safety and the extensive take-up of sport and other physical activities.

Leadership and management are good. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has enabled governors to play an effective role in decision making and has provided the wide-ranging programme of staff development that has underpinned school development. Subject leaders are becoming more knowledgeable about the school's effectiveness and how they can contribute to raising standards further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the current drive to improve writing standards is successful, especially in motivating pupils to use their writing skills in a wide range of subjects.

- Reduce the proportion of lessons that are no better than satisfactory.
- Ensure teachers and subject leaders continue to raise standards by extending the good practice in assessing and tracking pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In 2005 and 2006, the standards achieved by Year 6 were higher than those of the two previous years. Standards were above the national average in English, mathematics and science, and a higher than average proportion of pupils reached Level 5. Pupils' performance in science was particularly strong. Data shows that pupils made good progress compared with the levels they had reached in Year 2. The indications that boys do not do as well as girls in the tests have been responded to urgently. The school is ensuring by its monitoring and curricular planning that boys' needs are considered and that their progress is tracked rigorously. Both test performance and teachers' records of individual progress show that writing, while broadly satisfactory, remains a relative weakness. As a result, there is a determined initiative in all year groups to raise standards in this area and early indications are that this is resulting in improved progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The oldest pupils are mature and sensible young people with healthy and responsible attitudes. Surveys of pupils and parents show that the great majority enjoy school, have a positive approach to learning and are developing good skills for the next stage of their education and for adult life. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils show respect for the children and adults around them. They take responsibility seriously, for example, through the school council, in their role as 'peer mentors' and in the schemes to encourage playtime friendships. Their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is the result of the school's good provision that helps them to appreciate the range of lifestyles, values and cultures that make up modern Britain and the wider world. The importance of good attendance and punctuality is promoted well by staff but attendance rates remain no better than average because of the number of holidays taken by some families in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching is typified by high quality relationships between pupils and staff and the provision of interesting activities that are mostly tailored well to the full range of pupils in each class. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations of what is to be

covered are effective. In most lessons pupils have a clear understanding of what they are intended to learn but, as this is not as apparent in some lessons, learning is occasionally no better than satisfactory. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils who need additional help, both in class and when groups are withdrawn for extra activities. Specialist staff are used well, for instance in French and information and communication technology (ICT). The ways that teachers assess pupils' overall progress are good and there are plans for further improvement. In particular, half-termly assessments in key skills are carried out, monitored well by senior staff and are contributing to the effective tracking of individual progress over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides an effective balance between subjects. Pupils benefit from French which is taught as an additional subject across the school. There is a wide range of extra clubs and visits that pupils enjoy and which add to the quality of their learning, including a good programme of residential trips. A popular breakfast club caters well for families who choose to use it and provides opportunities for important informal links between staff and parents. There is a very effective programme of activities to promote pupils' personal, social and health education and to develop them as young citizens. Valuable partnerships have been established with other local schools. High quality outdoor resources are used well, including the swimming pool. Indoor space is used well but is limited and places constraints on how easily the school can offer as many extra teaching groups as it would wish. The school would like its curriculum to be even more effective and, to that end, has plans to make more effective and interesting links between subjects and to continue to plan a greater range of activities in ICT.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils and their parents correctly believe that the quality of care, guidance and support is good. Pupils greatly appreciate the relationships they have with adults in the school and how their work and efforts are valued. Staff and governors pay careful attention to children's welfare. Child protection and other health and safety procedures are rigorously established. The arrangements for tracking pupils' academic progress and setting targets help to guide their overall development well. However, the quality of day-to-day written marking and feedback to pupils varies considerably. There are examples of excellent practice that gives pupils a clear picture of how well they have done and of the next steps in their learning, although this is not applied consistently in some classes and subjects. The school is quite unusual in providing termly written reports to parents on their children's progress and effort. These are of good quality and understandably valued by parents and pupils alike.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There has been satisfactory improvement in the school since its last inspection and the track record of the current staff team shows a good overall capacity for further improvement. In terms of pupils' achievements, the school gives good value for money. The headteacher has demonstrated his excellent capacity for judging what the school needs to do. He has led the staff and governors to expand their knowledge of how well the school is performing in all aspects of its work. Subject leaders are playing an increasingly effective role in the school's development. They are developing the skills necessary to continue the impetus to raise standards. Governors, led well by their chairperson, are supportive and questioning and have a good grasp of many of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their monitoring visits are fairly informal and sometimes not planned rigorously enough for governors to check progress on some of the initiatives they have agreed. The school's written development plan and main self-evaluation records are good working documents. Effective partnerships have been established in key areas. Of particular note are the positive views of most parents, who value the communication between home and school, and the close links with the infant school which benefit both schools and smooth the transition for pupils and their families.

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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 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	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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.

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

31 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Earls Hall Junior School, Carlton Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 0QN

Thank you for your welcome during our recent visit. A special thank you goes to the pupils in Year 6 who gave up their time to tell Mr Gilbert about your school. When we met you, many of you told us you think your school is a good one. We agree! Here are some of the things we think are especially important:

- Your school makes sure you do well in your work and prepares you well for the next stage of your education.
- The school provides many activities that you enjoy, both in your lessons and in all the interesting clubs, sporting opportunities and visits you are offered, you have done really well in many of the sports competitions you have entered.
- You are taught well and all the staff care for you well.
- Your behaviour in school is excellent and, as a result, you take good advantage of all your school offers you.
- Mr Eastwood is an extremely good headteacher and he makes sure the staff and governors keep on making things better for you all.
- You are learning how to keep healthy and you know an exceptional amount about keeping yourselves and others safe in school, at home and when you are out on your own.

We agree with the staff and governors that there are a few areas that need to be improved even more:

- You do well in English, but your writing is not as good as your reading. You can help the teachers to help you by trying your best to improve your written work.
- We want the school to keep making sure that all your lessons are as good as possible so that you make good progress in all subjects and in all classes.
- Your teachers regularly check the progress you are making in subjects such as mathematics and writing. We have asked them to make sure these checks cover even more of the important skills they teach you, so that you all learn efficiently.

Best wishes to you all.

Yours sincerely

Helen Ranger Lead Inspector