

Earls Hall Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114725
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number	290011
Inspection date	7 February 2007
Reporting inspector	Nichola Perry

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr George Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Foster
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001
School address	Carlton Avenue Westcliff-on-sea Essex SS0 0QN
Telephone number	01702 344334
Fax number	01702 390241

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector

Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average school with average proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with levels expected for their age. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. A few come from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils are currently at an early stage of learning English.

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. The headteacher and senior staff provide strong leadership. There has been good progress since the last inspection with many additional initiatives introduced by the school. The school has good capacity to improve further.

The care and support provided for pupils is good and parents are rightly pleased with how the school cares for their children. As a result personal development is good and pupils love coming to school. Behaviour is excellent and well managed by staff. Pupils show an extremely good understanding of how to exercise and eat sensibly so as to maintain a healthy life style. Good foundations are laid for their future learning. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and are happy to share any problems with staff. Relationships are very strong and all staff provide super role models for pupils.

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils settle happily in the Reception classes and reach average standards by the end of the year, although not all pupils reach expected levels in the early learning goals. Standards by the end of Year 2 have been improving each year and in 2005 were above average overall. They dipped to average in 2006 because too few pupils achieved the higher levels, reflecting the abilities of that cohort. The school's assessments show the current Year 2 pupils are achieving well and are on track to gain above average standards in this year's national assessments. The curriculum is good. It is effectively enriched by a wide range of additional activities so that learning is interesting and lively, with some effective links between subjects, though these are not yet formally planned to maximise their impact on achievement in basic skills. Pupils particularly like the gardening activities and can describe the planting and growing process in detail.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has created a successful, happy and caring school where pupils of all abilities feel valued. The school's analysis and self evaluation is mostly accurate. There is a wide range of data maintained and teachers have good assessment information about pupils in their own classes. However, the current format of this information limits teachers' knowledge of the progress pupils are making over time. Similarly, information about pupils' attainment on entry to the school is not accessible enough to give a clear picture of progress being made from their starting points. Governors work closely with staff and have some involvement in monitoring of the school's performance. Finances are managed prudently and the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine pupil tracking data so that it is more efficiently organised to provide a clearer picture of pupils' progress over time.
- Devise a system that enables the school to have more accessible information on pupils' attainment on entry to the school in all areas of learning.
- Develop a plan which formalises how basics skills are taught systematically and progressively across all subjects, and which maximises opportunities for pupils to practise these skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those at the early stages of learning English, make at least satisfactory progress and often good

progress by the end of Year 2. In the Reception classes, there is strong emphasis on teaching basic skills and, as a result, some good progress is made. Standards by the end of Year 2 are currently above average. Standards improved from average to above average in 2005. While they dipped to average in 2006, the school's assessment information shows that pupils are currently making good progress and on track to achieve above average standards in 2007. In the current Year 2, more pupils are working at the higher levels in all three core subjects and assessment shows increased numbers of pupils on track to achieve Level 3.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are rightly proud of their school. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils foster personal development well. Pupils work and play happily together and they love coming to school. One parent commented, 'he thoroughly enjoys being at school and runs to school every morning, excited to be starting school.' This seems to sum up how the pupils feel about their school. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and most have an extremely good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles. This aspect of their learning is very well supported by fruit snacks and well balanced meals. Pupils are given lots of opportunities to take responsibility around the school from the Reception class upwards and the school council ensures that their views are heard. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others: they consider specific issues during 'circle time', suggesting ways of making things better; older pupils are very happy to help younger pupils. They provide financial support to charities. They are acquiring many skills useful to them in later life. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well through a range of activities and experiences, such as their visit to the Synagogue and their super session learning Jewish dancing. Attendance is broadly satisfactory and the school works hard to ensure that holidays taken during term time are kept to a minimum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons carefully, assess pupils' progress regularly and have high expectations of their performance. Pupils often have good opportunities to contribute to the assessment of their learning in lessons, although this is not consistently used in all classes. Lessons are made interesting and are often creative which motivates pupils to listen well and try hard. For example, in one lesson the class teacher became Goldilocks and tried to make amends for eating the porridge and breaking the chair. Pupils were able to ask her questions and suggest ways of making things better. Relationships are excellent and pupils' contributions are always valued highly. This helps pupils to gain good levels of confidence and independence in offering their opinions or asking for help. They are encouraged to think about what they are doing and they contribute eagerly when answering questions and during class discussions. Effective support from highly skilled teaching assistants contributes well to all pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad curriculum that gives pupils a well rounded education. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and underpins pupils' learning effectively. A wealth of

imaginative and structured learning opportunities is organised and imaginative play is well developed. Throughout the school there is a good balance between the strong emphasis on teaching key skills of literacy and numeracy and drama, dance, art, music and physical education (PE). All pupils have the opportunity to swim during the summer months in the on-site swimming pool. Pupils learn about other countries, their faiths and customs and there is good emphasis on developing pupils' multi-cultural awareness. There has been creative curriculum development such as gardening which enables pupils to grow their own fruit and vegetables and which contributes strongly to their understanding of healthy living. The curriculum is enriched by regular visitors, a good range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime, after school and on Friday afternoons, and a wide range of opportunities to visit places of interest. There are some good links between different subjects but these are not planned systematically enough to help pupils improve basic skills through different subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care and support provided for pupils is good. The school ensures that care of pupils is paramount: all the required procedures to ensure the safety of pupils are robust, regularly reviewed and understood by all staff. Teachers and support staff are sensitive to the needs of individual pupils and there is good liaison with external agencies to help pupils with emotional or learning difficulties or disabilities. There is good provision and support for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. From the Reception class upwards pupils are given many opportunities to develop responsibility. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased about the high level of care provided for their children. Academic guidance is satisfactory: pupils receive regular feedback on their performance during lessons, marking is positive and often linked to learning objectives and they know they have targets. However, they do not always have a sufficiently clear understanding of how to reach the next stage of learning in literacy or numeracy.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the school has been successful in generating a commitment from all staff to raising standards further and establishing a learning ethos where every pupil can flourish. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, has led the school in developing a culture where change is embraced readily and initiatives are welcomed so as to improve the quality of education provided. All staff care deeply about their pupils, work very well together and demonstrate a strong sense of teamwork. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and actions needed to improve. The school analyses its performance carefully and takes appropriate action to improve things. Although the quality of teaching and provision is monitored regularly, there is no systematic programme in place for this. Pupils' progress is assessed and monitored half termly to ensure timely and focused support. However, the school does not have effective systems yet to enable all staff to track progress made from pupils' entry to the school to the end of Year 2. Governors are supportive and a well organised team. They carry out their roles efficiently, have some involvement in strategic planning and evaluation and have an adequate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are beginning to understand how to challenge the school's performance.

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	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

08 February 2007

Dear Pupils

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

What a lovely school! I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to see you recently and I am writing to you to say thank you for being so welcoming and helpful. You clearly love coming to school and asked as many questions as I did! You are very polite children, especially when offering me a seat or showing me the way when I got lost. I think your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Mrs Foster and your teachers are very proud of you. You told me that yours is a friendly school and that everybody gets on well together. The school council listens to your suggestions and gets things done. You know how to look after yourselves and stay safe and I was very impressed with how much you know about being healthy.

All your teachers make sure that lessons are interesting and you work very hard in your lessons and try to do your best. This is why you are getting better in your reading, writing and mathematics. I've asked your teachers to do some more checking on how well you are doing in these subjects right from when you start in the Reception class, so that you get even better results by the time you leave to go into the junior school. I have also asked your teachers to try to give you as much practice in your reading, writing and mathematics in as many subjects as possible.

I wish you good luck for your future and hope you continue to learn well and to enjoy your school so much.

With best wishes

Nichola Perry

Lead Inspector