



Kents Hill Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115050
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290113
Inspection date 27 February 2007
Reporting inspector Helen Ranger

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Kents Hill Road
School category	Community		Benfleet
Age range of pupils	4-7		Essex SS7 5PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268 792500
Number on roll (school)	239	Fax number	01268 795066
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr L Pipe
		Headteacher	Mrs S Tait
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

Age group 4-7	Inspection date 27 February 2007	Inspection number 290113
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector over one day.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school where about three quarters of pupils come from the immediate area. Only a small number of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Pupils come from an average range of socio-economic backgrounds. A lower than average proportion have learning difficulties but a high percentage of these pupils have statements of special educational need. When they start school, children's attainment is mostly at the levels expected nationally, although their communication and social skills are often lower than expected. The attainment on entry of the current Reception year was much lower than usual, especially in personal, social and emotional development.

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 because all the important features of its work are at least good and there are many examples of exemplary practice. The school is valued highly by its pupils and parents and gives excellent value for money. Parents' views are summed up by one who wrote, 'Kents Hill is run by a great headteacher and she is supported by fabulous teachers'. The headteacher is held in high esteem by her staff too. She has provided a clear vision and stability in the school over a long period. She leads a strong and committed team of staff and governors that has built further on the high standards which were identified at the time of the school's last inspection.

Because the teaching and curriculum are outstanding in all three year groups, so is pupils' achievement. Children get a very good start in Reception and continue to make very good progress through Key Stage 1. By Year 2, attainment is significantly above the national average, and in 2006 it was exceptionally high. Writing standards in particular are much higher than is usually seen. While both boys and girls reach higher than average standards in their work, the girls have often done better than the boys in reading and writing in recent years. The school has taken successful action to tackle this issue and the gap is rapidly closing. The next challenge for the school is to ensure that both boys and girls consistently reach equally high standards.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The most notable features are their enjoyment of learning, their confidence and independence. Behaviour is good. Many start school needing considerable support with their social development. The success of the school's provision is evident in how quickly they become well behaved and co-operative individuals who take initiative in their learning. Attendance has improved significantly over the past three years and is now above average because of effective efforts by the school to discourage any unnecessary absence.

The curriculum provides a very wide range of interesting activities. Skilful teaching tailors activities very closely to the needs of individual pupils and the excellent arrangements for pupils' care, guidance and support are implemented very effectively. Teachers constantly use detailed assessments of each child's progress to modify their work as appropriate. They set targets in both academic and personal development, which the pupils understand, and these are reviewed regularly. As a result, learning builds up systematically for all pupils. The school truly demonstrates its stated commitment to the national initiatives to ensure every pupil's health, welfare and achievement.

Underpinning the excellent provision and high standards are the extremely effective efforts of staff and governors. They are constantly striving to keep their school moving forward. They have very rigorous procedures for evaluating and improving their work. Governors have established a very strong partnership with pupils' families, other local schools, relevant specialist agencies and the local community, all of which have a very positive impact on the provision for pupils. The school's long track record of success and the staff's determination to do even more for the pupils in their care show an extremely good capacity to continue to improve in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the action to improve boys' achievement continues to be successful so that boys and girls consistently reach equally high standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress because all year groups are taught so well and the provision for both their personal and academic achievement interconnect. Since the last inspection, the overall attainment of pupils when they start school has fallen significantly but the school has continued to ensure that they build on their learning very well. By the end of the Reception year, standards exceed those expected nationally and pupils have made particularly good progress in their language and mathematical skills. In the past five years, the standards reached by the end of Year 2 have been consistently above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2006, a much higher than average proportion of pupils reached the higher level 3. The school's efforts to improve boys' achievement resulted in, for example, five times as many boys reaching level 3 in their speaking and listening skills as in 2005, three times as many reaching level 3 in writing and almost twice as many in science.

The current pupils continue to do very well in all year groups. Pupils with learning difficulties do very well for their capabilities. Pupils who find learning easier are continually stretched and challenged to do their best.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The consistency of care and the provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, produces excellent results. Pupils have an extremely good understanding of what makes a safe and healthy lifestyle. This has been recognised in the awards of National Healthy Schools Standard and Activemark. Pupils make very good use of the increased time now devoted to physical education and 'out of school hours' clubs. Adults' constant encouragement of appropriate behaviour results in good standards. This is particularly noticeable in Reception where pupils who started school with particular needs in this area rapidly become much more mature and considerate. For their age, pupils play an effective role in the class and school councils and staff ensure that everyone has the chance to contribute to these. There are increasing links with the junior school. For example, during the inspection, older children visited for their regular lunchtime games club with able pupils. The combination of pupils' high academic standards and their well developed social skills prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education and provide an excellent foundation for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching in all age groups is consistently good and often outstanding. Close teamwork and consistency of approach by the staff are important features in the success of pupils' learning and this includes the valuable contribution made by classroom assistants. Activities are planned well, according to the range of pupils' capabilities, and based securely on excellent use of the assessment systems. Good levels of adult support are offered to pupils when appropriate but there is also a great deal of encouragement for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and become increasingly independent. A parent commented, 'The school encourages independence and confidence, plus early decision making skills that make my daughter feel valued'. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported very well. For example, they have excellent individual cards that give them constant reminders and feedback about their targets and progress. Teachers and pupils use the computers and interactive whiteboards regularly and effectively to enhance the quality of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. As well as covering the required subjects in all age groups, the school makes sure that learning is enjoyable and purposeful by making numerous relevant and interesting links between subjects. It tailors its curriculum to pupils' needs very well, based on regular monitoring and discussion among the staff. The impact of this is typified by the success of the action to improve boys' achievements and their attitudes to learning. This has included an increase in practical activities for all pupils, greater use of computers and a critical review and replacement of book stocks. A recent holiday reading initiative resulted in more boys completing the project than girls. A good range of visits and clubs is hugely enjoyed by pupils and valued by parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents are right to be very positive about the quality of care provided for their children. The school is vigilant in looking after pupils' day to day welfare, including its systems for vetting the adults who work or help in school. The site and building are maintained to a high standard. Attractive displays celebrate and encourage pupils' achievements and provide a wide range of information for families. Excellent partnerships exist with relevant outside agencies. These especially support pupils with learning difficulties, including those with statements of special education need. The very occasional incident of racist behaviour or bullying is taken very seriously by staff, and pupils express their confidence in staff to sort out any problems. Excellent arrangements exist to assess and track pupils' individual progress. As a result, classes and individual pupils are set

targets for their learning that are shared well with parents and regularly reviewed to support pupils' academic and personal development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is constantly striving for further improvement by detailed and rigorous monitoring of its work and by setting the staff and pupils challenging but realistic targets. It is modest about some of its successes but its self-evaluation systems are, nevertheless, extremely effective. A pivotal role is played by the headteacher whom staff describe as 'an inspiration who leads by example'. The very effective systems for continuing professional development ensure that all staff contribute well to checking how well the school is doing and join in the initiatives to improve further. Subject leaders successfully use a wide range of strategies to monitor the curriculum and pupils' achievements. Governance is outstanding. Governors are very well informed and active. They work closely with the staff. They know the school well and how well the pupils are performing. They are both supportive and questioning. This close and very effective teamwork by the adults who lead and manage the school has resulted in a school that has been successful for a long time. It shows no sign of slowing down in its efforts to provide the community with high quality education for its children.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

28 February 2007

Dear Children

Kents Hill Infant School, Kents Hill Road, Benfleet, Essex SS7 5PS

This letter is to say a very big thank you to all of you for welcoming me to your school. I shall remember your friendly smiles and busy classrooms for a long time.

I think you go to a school that is very special. It helps you to grow into young people who care for others and it makes sure you do very well in your work. I was very impressed to see what good writers you are! Your teachers have been working hard to make sure everyone in the school does as well as possible. They know that sometimes boys have different interests from girls and learn in different ways. I want them to keep checking that boys and girls do equally well in their work.

You have an excellent headteacher. She works in a big team with the other adults who work in school and with the governors. Together, they make sure that your school keeps on helping you and your families. Many of your parents wrote to me to say they think you go to a very good school and I agree with them. When I spoke to some of you during my visit, you told me how much you like your teachers and the interesting activities they plan for you. I agree with you that you have really good teachers and I can see why you enjoy your lessons. Your teachers are very good at checking how well you are getting on and letting you know what you need to learn next.

You are learning very well how to lead safe and healthy lives and it was good to see how much you enjoy playtimes and the sports and other clubs the school offers you. I was pleased to see how well you work together and that you often do not need an adult to help you plan the activities you do. You help the school to run smoothly with the support of your school council.

Keep on enjoying all that Kents Hill Infant School offers you.

Best wishes,

Mrs Helen Ranger Inspector