



Earls Colne Primary School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115312
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290202
Inspection dates 16–20 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ruth Frith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Park Lane
School category	Foundation		Earls Colne, Earls Colne
Age range of pupils	3–11		Colchester, Essex CO6 2RH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01787 222205
Number on roll (school)	300	Fax number	01787 222010
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs N Spelling
		Headteacher	Mrs J I Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 16–20 November 2006	Inspection number 290202
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average size primary school. Pupils come from a socially mixed, mainly rural area and the proportion eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds and a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly below average and four pupils have a statement of special educational need. Pupils' attainment on entry to school is similar to national expectations. In the previous inspection in 2004, the school was found to have serious weaknesses in teaching and achievement in English and science in Key Stage 2 and in some aspects of leadership and management. There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection and seven teachers have joined the school since the beginning of 2006. The nursery was not included in this inspection as it was inspected separately in November 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Earls Colne Primary School provides a good standard of education and has made considerable progress since its last inspection. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further. The good leadership of the headteacher, leadership from other managers, support from staff and the effective governing body have been key factors in the school's improvement. Staff and governors have a very clear understanding of the school. Their accurate and insightful self-evaluation has helped them to reflect on how well the school is doing and what they need to do next. The school's judgements are accurate and closely match the inspectors' findings. The very large majority of parents are positive about the school and their comments reflect this. For example, they say 'My child loves school and is making great academic progress in a nurturing and sociable environment' and 'Significant progress has been made in the school over the last year'.

Teaching and the curriculum in Reception are good and children make good progress. They settle quickly because procedures are clear and activities are interesting. Teachers build on this good grounding and pupils in Key Stage 1 are currently making good progress and achieving well. Significant and rapid improvements in teaching, learning and the curriculum have been made since the disappointing 2006 Year 2 national assessments. These have resulted in pupils now working at levels which are at least average and sometimes above. Particularly good improvements have been made in reading. Many changes are quite new so there has not been sufficient time to see a sustained impact in test results. Pupils progress well in Key Stage 2 so that, by the time they leave school, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science.

Teaching is good and ensures that learning builds systematically over time. This is because teachers are now more effective at checking pupils' progress and planning work which provides good challenge for all. Although teachers have improved their use of this assessment information, not enough is done to accurately and efficiently record children's attainment on entry to school and their progress over time. The curriculum is good and is becoming more interesting as staff create links between subjects and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and are evident in their good behaviour and relationships. Pupils have good attitudes to learning because they enjoy what they are doing and feel safe and happy in school. Attendance is broadly satisfactory but declined last year. Not enough is done to ensure that parents bring their children to school regularly. The school takes good pastoral and academic care of its pupils. Pupils develop into mature and thoughtful learners who are well prepared for their next stage of schooling and their future economic well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the recent improvements in Key Stage 1 are sustained so standards continue to rise.
- Create a more efficient system for recording pupils' attainment on entry to Reception and their progress throughout the school.
- Develop systems and procedures to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From broadly average starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. On entry to Year 1 they have at least reached the goals set nationally for all areas of learning and in some cases have progressed further. Teaching and learning are now good and pupils in Key Stage 1 are working at levels which are at least average and frequently beyond. This is eliminating the legacy of underachievement. The results of the Year 6 national assessments in 2006 reflect the good progress that pupils made. Particularly good progress was made in English and the school achieved its challenging target. Pupils in the current Year 6 are working at levels above those expected for their age in English and mathematics which indicates that they are on track to continue the school's trend of improvement. Pupils of all capabilities, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well. There is also evidence of good standards in areas other than the core subjects, for example, in art.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic in lessons. They say they are very happy at school and report that teachers make the learning fun. This reflects the good level of support provided. A few instances of bullying are reported but these are dealt with effectively by the school. Attendance is very slightly below average and declined last year. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Pupils respect each other's views and work and play happily together. Their understanding of other cultures and beliefs is well developed through the topics studied and opportunities for spiritual awareness are incorporated well in assemblies.

Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and the majority are enthusiastic about physical education. Many take advantage of the extra-curricular sport. Pupils actively contribute to the school community through the school council which works well to discuss concerns and developments in the school. Examples of its work include choosing appropriate charities to support. Many pupils are involved in fundraising or participating in local events. Several older pupils volunteer to take on responsibilities by training as playleaders and supporting younger children.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Very recent staff changes mean that teaching and learning are now good for pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 and the previous decline in standards has been reversed. Pupils are learning at a good rate in lessons and teachers' records demonstrate that learning has been good over the first half-term of this school year. Pupils benefit from good planning and the fact that teachers ensure that all are fully aware of the purpose of the lesson. Teachers provide good quality feedback to pupils and this helps them to understand what they do well and how to improve. Teachers also make good use of technology, including computerised whiteboards, to add interest to lessons. In nearly all lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and use interesting teaching methods that hold pupils' interest well. Occasionally, the pace of learning varies and parts of the lesson are too slow. In outstanding lessons, learning proceeds at a fast pace and teaching harnesses pupils' imagination in preparation for future work, such as challenging writing tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school places a commendably strong emphasis upon teaching a good breadth of subjects while successfully improving standards in English, mathematics and science. The curriculum is enriched by strengths in art and design and physical education and by interesting links between subjects, such as history and English. The successful personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to understand how to stay safe and healthy. The school has good links with the local community which enhance the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 5 work on science projects with a local secondary school and pupils throughout the school produce art work to contribute to the local flower festival. Pupils enjoy various clubs and visits and learn from visitors to the school. These all make a positive contribution to their education. The school rightly recognises the value of improving its planning to develop skills and creativity in and between different subjects. The curriculum for children in the Reception class is good and includes plenty of opportunities for children to learn outside and make progress through play activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils feel safe in school. Child protection and health and safety procedures are robust. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well, for example through special social skills groups. Teachers are increasingly helping pupils to assess their own learning; they give pupils clear feedback and guide their academic learning well. There are examples of very informative marking when teachers make clear reference to how well pupils have met a specific objective. These comments

help pupils take responsibility for their learning. As one pupil wrote in response to a comment, 'I'll try better next time'. The school's procedures to track pupils' progress over time are comprehensive. However, the systems are very time consuming when teachers need to extract information about the progress of particular groups of pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and clearly focused on improving the quality of education and raising standards. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has been particularly effective in developing a common sense of purpose amongst staff, who now share her vision for the development of the school. New staff have quickly and successfully settled in the school and staff morale is very high. The headteacher has readily responded to support from other professionals and local authority personnel, has improved her leadership skills and developed more robust management systems. Senior and middle managers take on their responsibilities effectively and have clear plans for improvement. There are good systems for checking how well the school is doing and identifying what it could do better. Actions taken by the school are well targeted and have a positive impact on the school's development, for example the raising of standards in Key Stage 1. The effective governing body is now monitoring and evaluating the work of the school well and members are fully involved in the school's development.

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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 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.

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 November 2006

Dear Children

Earls Colne Primary School and Nursery, Park Lane, Earls Colne, Colchester, Essex. CO6 2RH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and finding out about the work you have done. We were pleased to hear that you enjoy school and could talk enthusiastically about all the good things that happen there. We were pleased that lots of you enjoy writing.

These are some of the best things about your school:

- You work hard and do well in English, mathematics and science. Your art work is good.
- You are interested in technology and particularly like the interactive whiteboards and the computer suite.
- You like school and behave well because you are interested in what you are doing.
- All the staff work very well together as a team. They enjoy teaching you and the teaching is good.
- The activities you do and the things you study are interesting which helps to make learning fun.
- The work you do in the school council is good and helps you to understand how the school could be improved.
- Staff look after you well and you feel safe in school. We were pleased to hear that you would talk to a member of staff if you had problems.

Mrs Clarke leads and manages the school well, and staff and governors give her lots of help. Many things have improved recently but she is keen to make the school even better. We agreed that staff will continue to help those of you in Year 1 and Year 2 so that you achieve as well as you can. Staff also need to find a better way of recording your progress and what you know. Most of you arrive at school regularly and on time. Well done! However, the school's attendance rate is not as good as it should be so we are asking staff to see if they can improve this.

We left your school confident that it will continue to improve and wish you all well in the future.

Ruth Frith

Lead inspector