

Hamstead Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103896
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	308448
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Indev Bedi
Headteacher	Ann Brookes
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2003
School address	Tanhouse Avenue Great Barr Birmingham B43 5AS
Telephone number	01213 571603
Fax number	01213 571603

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hamstead Infant School is a similar size to most schools for pupils of this age. The pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds with a significant number from homes experiencing some hardship. Just under half of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, especially Indian. One in five pupils speaks English as an additional language. Fewer pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is usually found in schools of this size. When children start in the Nursery, they have below the expected level of skills and knowledge.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Virtually every parent and carer is in favour of what this good school does for their children. Parents identify that the good teaching enables their children to make good progress. They are not wrong. The school has many good features and only a few areas for development. It has made steady improvement over the last few years because of the headteacher's excellent leadership and high expectations.

Standards are above average by the end of Year 2. This represents good achievement by the pupils from their starting points. Achievement is consistent in all classes and the dips in Year 1 that showed up in the past have been eliminated. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception. Most achieve the learning goals set for their age. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well because their work is based firmly on the small steps that they must take to move ahead. Indian pupils make good progress. Pupils are given the skills and knowledge that will help them succeed when they go to junior school or make their way in the world at large.

There is a creative and inviting curriculum that helps pupils gather the necessary knowledge and skills in all subjects. The themes that pupils learn about are well matched to their interests and learning needs. Teachers interpret these themes in often innovative ways, which ensures pupils are well motivated, work hard and achieve well. Teaching quality has been strengthened effectively and is now consistently good in all classes.

Staff are not just concerned with the academic progress made by pupils. They place their personal development high in priority. Pupils are kind, caring and well behaved, and they work and play harmoniously with each other. They have good opportunities to contribute to their own community and are active fund-raisers for less fortunate people both in the local area and wider afield. Pupils' awareness of the need for healthy and safe lifestyles is good. They enjoy school, although the level of attendance is below average. In part, this is due to the sorts of illness that commonly affect youngsters, but there is also a fairly high proportion of absence because pupils have holidays in term time. It is evident that such absence affects the rate of progress of those involved, which the school tracks carefully.

Pupils are extremely well cared for and safeguarded. The school works effectively with parents, carers and other agencies to ensure pupils' welfare is secure. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Information is shared with pupils to help them take the next step in their learning, but this is not done as frequently as it might be. School leaders recognise this is an area for improvement.

Leadership and management are good. This is rooted in the firm direction from the headteacher. Senior leaders work effectively as a team and have ensured that good improvement was made in the past. This is very likely to continue in the future because of leaders' commitment and successful work to increase standards and achievement. The school sets very challenging targets for pupils' achievement that the pupils are clearly on line to meet by the end of the school year. School self-evaluation is accurate and is based on careful checking and evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement. Many governors have been appointed recently and have not yet had time to take on a full role in the evaluation of school performance or to ask questions to check the school is as successful as it should be.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Nursery and Reception children enjoy school. Recently, a few children aged three, as well as the more usual four-year-olds, have started school. All the new children have settled well and their parents are pleased with the way the school has worked with them to make the transfer from home to school such a success. The children work enthusiastically both indoors and out. The classrooms and outdoor space are cheerful and welcoming, and very well resourced. Teaching quality is good, so the children make good progress as they build the early skills and knowledge expected of their ages. By the time they leave Reception, most children have reached these goals. Staff take good care of the children and make sure they are safe and secure. The children behave well, learn to play and work sensibly together and they enjoy each other's company. Their confidence increases at a good rate and many children in Reception are able to talk in a quite mature way about their learning and play in school. Leadership and management are good. School leaders recognise that more can be done to maximise children's learning when they are outside, so that it is as effective as their work indoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that pupils know what they have to learn to reach their targets, are told how well they are doing and how they can improve their work.
- Work with parents to improve attendance by reducing the number of holidays taken in term time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Progress is good in Nursery. Children start school with below average levels of skills and knowledge but they extend these successfully in Nursery because the staff provide fascinating activities and encourage the children to be inquisitive. Reception children become increasingly confident and aware of the world around them. They build good skills in number, communication, language and literacy, and in their personal and social development. By the time they leave Reception, most have reached the levels expected of children of their age.

Although, in the past, progress dipped in Year 1, it is now at the same good rate as in the other years in school. This is due to improvements in teaching and in the effectiveness of tracking pupils' progress. The information from this tracking is used successfully to ensure work is well matched to Year 1 pupils' needs. In Year 2, pupils make good progress. Provision is good and pupils of all abilities do well. The proportion of pupils likely to reach the higher Level 3 is greater this year than last. Results in writing have been a particular success story for the school because this subject is taught very well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is something the school promotes well. Parents recognise this and many comment on the happiness of their children, the good behaviour in school and the friendliness of everyone. Children in Nursery and Reception build their personal, social and emotional development well and become inquisitive and sensible learners.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. The strong links with the local church enhance pupils' ability to stop, think and reflect about their learning. Pupils have many opportunities to find out about life, belief and work in other cultures through the good work done in dance, art, music and participation in local festivals and competitions.

Attendance is a central priority for improvement. The school can show that pupils who are away frequently are missing important work and that this slows their progress. School is working well to improve attendance, although some parents choose to take holidays in term time, which does not help their children to achieve well enough.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most of the time, pupils are taught well. There has been an improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school, which is especially marked in Year 1. Currently, teaching is good in all years from Nursery to Year 2.

Pupils of all abilities are generally well supported. Their work is challenging, which spurs the higher attainers to good achievement. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities work well in their groups, although just occasionally, the support for them at the beginning of lessons is not as good as it is in the rest of the session.

Learning usually goes at a good pace. Pupils work productively and enjoy what they are doing. Behaviour is well managed and lessons are calm and settled, so pupils complete all the work that is set for them.

Children are taught well in Nursery and Reception. The staff have a good understanding of the needs of these young children and they make sure that they settle happily to life in school. There is an effective blend of work that children complete independently and adult-directed tasks. This helps the children build good levels of confidence and self-esteem and to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked effectively to develop a well planned curriculum that is centred on the study of themes such as Plants and Animals in Year 1. These themes give pupils a heightened awareness of topical events, community projects, life overseas and environmental issues, as well as building their subject knowledge and skills. The other key focus in the curriculum is on creativity in learning, which is well promoted in writing, art, dance and music.

Pupils' personal development is fostered well, with many opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and how to treat other people. Facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory. The computer room is cramped, although the school has a clearly logged priority to extend the space and improve the hardware. Despite the difficulties with the accommodation, pupils' progress in ICT is at the expected rate.

The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception is well tuned to children's needs across the six areas they explore. There is a practical, investigational slant to the work that encourages the children to find out more about the world, develop their creative and physical skills, and to talk about favourite stories and rhymes. The outside environment is well planned and equipped,

and is used as a part of the children's classroom. Children's learning often, but not always, flows seamlessly between indoors and out.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have well planned individual work programmes that enable them to make steady progress. Those who speak English as an additional language are set suitable work to help them become fluent in their new language. This works well and nearly every pupil uses English effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents and their children are fulsome in their praise of the school's work to take outstanding care of all pupils. The pupils come to school secure in the knowledge that they are safeguarded thoroughly. Child protection procedures are robust. Teaching assistants play a valuable and effective role in ensuring pupils have a firm understanding of how to keep healthy, stay safe and cope with the problems that may occasionally occur.

Guidance to show pupils how to make best possible progress is satisfactory. The school has impressive tracking systems to make sure pupils meet their challenging targets but, so far, pupils themselves are not sufficiently well informed about the next steps they must take in learning, how well they are achieving and how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good quality leadership and management stems from the headteacher's dedication to the highest standards from pupils and staff. She has set out a very clear plan for improvement, which all staff support fully. Senior leaders work well to support the high expectations and manageable, but challenging, targets that are set for pupils' achievement. Standards and achievement are rising because improvements are successfully increasing the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum.

Systems to check and evaluate the school's work are well focused on how it is influencing pupils' achievement. Senior leaders have a key role in making these checks. Governors' involvement is not yet full because of past recruitment difficulties and the fact that, whilst there is now a full governing body, many are new to post and are still learning their roles. Nonetheless, school self-evaluation is accurate, school leaders know what they have to work at next for improvement, and their capacity for making the school even better is good.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
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

10 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamstead Infant School, Great Barr B43 5AS

We enjoyed visiting your school a lot. We found that you love coming to school and that you are sensible and friendly. Thank you for the welcome you gave us.

We learned a lot about why your school is a good one. We made a long list of these things. We think these are the main ones.

- When you start in the Nursery, you quickly settle and do good work.
- When you are in the Reception class, you have lots of exciting things to discover.
- In Year 1, you work well and enjoy weaving in art and finding out about different materials in science.
- When you get to Year 2, you have already learned a lot and you are keen to do well.
- We remember that when we visited you, Year 2 learned to use the different weighing balances and to write about Red Riding Hood using adjectives and adverbs.
- In all classes, your lessons are fun and you are taught well.
- We noticed how well behaved you are and how you take care of each other.
- Your parents and carers say you are well looked after and you told us the same.
- You like Miss Brookes and you follow her very good advice. She is a really successful headteacher. Your school is getting better and better. To help keep this going, we have suggested that your teachers do the following.
- Tell you more about what they expect you to learn, how well you are getting on and what you can do to improve even more.
- Work with parents and carers to improve attendance.

We think you can help your teachers make these improvements by telling them how well you think you are doing in your lessons.

We believe some of you will be able to read parts of our report and hope that you have a go. We also hope that you will talk to those at home about why you like school and don't want to miss any of it.

Yours Sincerely

David Carrington Lead inspector

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