

Hertford Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114368
Local Authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	311573
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	190
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	85
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joy Whittan
Headteacher	C Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hertford Road Brighton BN1 7GF
Telephone number	01273 552931
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This urban school serves its local area. A third of the children on roll are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. These difficulties are mostly linked to communication, speech and language problems. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is low. The school has achieved a number of national awards reflecting its commitment to promoting healthy active lifestyles and environmental awareness. It is presently working towards an information and communication technology award.

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's strong leadership qualities and the supportive teamwork of the staff have raised the school's reputation locally over the last few years and it is enjoying a resurgence of popularity. This is creating a slightly changing profile of pupils that attend the school, which it is handling extremely well. The parents' undoubted support is reflected by one remark, typical of many others: 'The headteacher runs an exciting, inspiring, fun and caring school.'

While there is an increasing variability in the backgrounds of pupils attending. A significant proportion of children enter the school with standards below those generally expected for their age. This was certainly the case for those now in Year 2. By the time pupils leave, they are reaching broadly average standards, shown both in the work they produce and in the results from national tests for 7-year-olds. This is because they make excellent progress through the EYFS and consistently good progress through the rest of the school. Teaching development has been at the heart of improvement. Evidence from both the inspection and the school's own monitoring shows that teaching is good overall and outstanding in the EYFS. There are also some other examples of exemplary practice in the rest of the school. All teachers have a clear understanding about how to develop the right methods to interest and motivate pupils into learning. Teachers use probing questioning techniques that make pupils think hard. Group work is effective although, on some occasions in Years 1 and 2, tasks are too general and not linked well enough to provide each individual with the highest level of challenge. This challenge is at its best when each individual's work has been linked to previous assessments as was seen in one Reception class. Here the teaching was altered to accommodate the needs of a pupil who had previously struggled with their communication skills. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties make exceptional progress since their needs are identified early and they are supported very well in each of their individual and specific needs. As a result, some reach national average standards in their tests but from much lower starting points.

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and thoroughly enjoy their education. This is due in no small part to the excellent way they are looked after, cared for and given opportunities in a wide variety of curricular activities. Pupils feel safe and secure and are building good foundations for future learning. One area that the school has rightly targeted is attendance. While the vast majority of pupils have good levels of attendance there are a small minority of families who find it harder to ensure their children attend regularly. This term there appears to have been some major success from the initiatives as the rate of attendance has significantly risen and is now slightly above the national average.

The headteacher has ensured that leadership and management structures are secure and she has gathered an effective senior team and governing body to deliver the improvements. Priorities are clear and based very well on identified weaknesses that staff take shared responsibility for remedying. Due to good school self-evaluation, the school has continued to move forward from a strong position at the last inspection. It clearly has a good capacity to continue to do so.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision is outstanding and children make exceptional progress because of the very highly focused teaching. While children enter the Nursery with attainment below that expected for

their age, it is particularly lower in communication and literacy skills. Very well considered, daily routines are established quickly so that children settle into their school life well. All areas of the curriculum have an appropriate balance between those chosen by children and those directed by the teacher. Children's behaviour is exceptionally good. They respond positively to an extremely stimulating environment both indoors and outside. Children demonstrate a caring attitude. For example, they carefully and independently placed snails that they had found back into their own habitat. The high quality of support and intervention of staff gives strong direction to the learning. Children enjoy their learning and are keen to share it with adults. They are able to choose tasks independently and with confidence. The very thorough planning in Reception is adapted so that it reflects the interests of the children and takes account of very accurate prior assessment. The provision is highly effectively led and there is a clear vision for future improvement. This is rightly set at developing further cohesion between the nursery and reception systems.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the good assessment information more effectively to provide the highest level of challenge for all pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Build on the work done to make parents aware of the importance of attending school so that pupils' rates of attendance at least consistently reach the national average.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because of their good attitudes to learning and the way that they enthusiastically undertake the tasks they are asked to do. After the excellent start in the EYFS, pupils are prepared well for more formal work in Year 1. They are also given opportunities to learn through role-play and this helps their social and personal development as well as developing their independence. By Year 2, pupils are beginning to grasp the basic skills they will need in literacy and numeracy and this has resulted in a steady rise in results at the end of Key Stage 1. The school's sharp focus on writing resulted in a steep rise in test scores in 2007. While not quite as good in 2008, the evidence from assessment information shows that pupils' skill levels were lower when they started school so this also represents good progress. Not complacent with these improvements the school is rightly continuing to target important areas for development, such as in using assessment better, so that more pupils reach their full potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school was summed up by one pupil who remarked, 'I like learning new things.' In all classes, pupils relish the opportunity to work on their own or in small groups. They concentrate hard, produce good quality work and teachers very rarely have to intervene to make sure they keep 'on task'. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility such as by ringing the school bell, being involved in community events, taking messages or joining committees such as the Eco-council. Not surprisingly, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Themes in assemblies are developed through discussion during the rest of the day and pupils have good opportunities to understand the traditions and cultures in other countries. This is all ensuring that there is good development of community cohesion. Pupils are developing a good healthy lifestyle. They are encouraged to drink water regularly, be involved in physical activity and to eat copious quantities of fruit and vegetables, some of

which they grow themselves. Attendance has been a continuing issue for a small number of families. While the longer-term percentage is still lower than the target set by the school, recent support for these families has been significant. For example, during the inspection one mother was sent by her child to check that a legitimate day's absence would not affect his chances of receiving his attendance certificate.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching through the school is consistently good with some that is outstanding. All teachers have high quality skills for developing appropriate planning that produces varied and interesting lessons. Lessons move at a good pace and teachers ensure they leave time towards the end of each session to recap what has been learnt and to challenge thinking even more. Pupils respond very well to these challenges and noticeably settle quickly when asked to work on their own or in small groups. Behaviour is always good, even from pupils who find this aspect of school life more difficult. Teaching assistants are used very well as they have clear directions from the teacher about where they are to focus their support. Technology, such as the use of the interactive whiteboards and laptop computers, makes lessons more interesting and fun. Marking is thorough and provides good feedback. It is used well to define what will be learnt next although it could be better used in Years 1 and 2 to determine what the next small steps in learning are for each individual.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Planning links first-hand practical or investigative work to the development of pupils' personal and academic skills. Partly because of the good curriculum, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly strong progress in national tests compared to the national picture. There is good provision for information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy. The school is rightly working on further refinement of the curriculum to ensure a smoother transition between the EYFS and Year 1. There is a wide range of enrichment activities and pupils make a strong contribution to their local community. All these opportunities ensure that pupils are becoming self-confident, active learners and well prepared for their move to the junior school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There are extremely strong support systems to ensure pupils progress well both academically and personally. The outstanding care and guidance has been at the heart of ensuring this is a calm and orderly school. Thorough analysis of past performance in both internal and external tests helps set the priorities for whole school development. For example, the successful focus on writing has led to better achievement. An issue with ICT identified at the last inspection has raised standards by providing better hardware and good professional development. Very effective identification of pupils' needs means that intervention is rapid. Pastoral care and support is a particular strength. Safeguarding procedures are robust and the school works hard to ensure that pupils and their families are fully supported through the highly effective use of extensive

external agency guidance. Induction systems in the EYFS are extremely thorough so that these young children settle very quickly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The highly experienced headteacher provides a clear direction to all the school's work and this is a particular strength of the school. Since her arrival, she, along with the committed staff and knowledgeable governors, has worked to raise pupils' achievement and raise the school's profile within the local area. As a result, pupil numbers have increased significantly in the past three years. Parents are supportive of all the school offers and feel that their views are valued. The relatively recent restructured senior leadership team are beginning to have the confidence to remedy those areas identified as being relatively weaker. They are innovative and provide a sounding board for new ideas even though they look to advice from the headteacher for the overall decision-making process. Nevertheless, the good leadership is ensuring challenging targets are being met.

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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
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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 learners' needs?	2
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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- 3 October 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Hertford Infant and Nursery School, Brighton BN1 7GF Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We very much enjoyed meeting and talking to you all and seeing you at work. I especially enjoyed my gingerbread man that you cooked for me! You will not be surprised to hear that we have said you go to a good school. In fact, we think there are also some things that are outstanding. I have included the main points of our report below.
- You told us how much you really do enjoy school and many of your parents and carers agreed. We can see why. There are very many exciting things to do during lessons as well as before and after school.
- You are taught well so that you all make good progress. Those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes make exceptionally good progress.
- We think your behaviour is good, just as you told us. We could see that you all get on with each other and try hard to look after each other as well.
- Your teachers mark your work very well and help you move on to the next things that you need to learn. We have asked that they find more ways to use this information to make sure each of you does as well as you can.
- It is a pity that not all of you attend school as often as you should. This means that the school is not reaching the attendance targets that it should.
- Your headteacher and all the staff have a very clear idea about what needs to be done to make sure your school keeps on improving. They have some interesting ideas for the future to ensure your school becomes one of the best.

You are rightly very proud of your school so make sure you continue to work hard, keep having many ideas for improving things and attend school as regularly as you possibly can.

Best wishes for the future. Yours sincerely

David Collard Lead inspector