

King's Ford Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114717
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311674
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	123
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jessica King
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Rowley
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2002
School address	Gloucester Avenue Shrub End Colchester Essex CO2 9AZ
Telephone number	01206 574524
Fax number	01206 560782

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This infant school with a Nursery is much smaller than most primary schools. The school serves the immediate vicinity, which consists, in the main, of military housing and a large social housing estate. About a quarter of the pupils come from Army families. This leads to a much higher than normal turnover of pupils as households are transferred away from the area. Almost all the pupils are White British, and there are a few pupils from eight minority ethnic groups. There are nine pupils who speak English as an additional language and are at an early stage of learning English. Overall, pupils' social circumstances are well below usual levels. An above average number have learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils enter the Nursery with skills much below those usually found.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good and rapidly improving school provides good value for money. When they first start school in the Nursery, children have poor skills and some are at an early stage of learning English. Because the provision is good in the Nursery and Reception classes, children make good gains in their learning and achieve well. Even so, only about half the pupils attain the nationally expected goals in all areas of learning when they enter Year 1 and overall their attainment is below that expected.

National test results were significantly below average for the five years up to 2006. At the end of the 2005–2006 school year, under the effective leadership of the headteacher, the school completely changed its curriculum. Staff decided that they wanted to make the curriculum much more creative. They abandoned individual lessons which gave specified times to each subject and moved towards making sure that work always started from the pupils' interests. They linked curriculum areas so that one extended theme is taught each term, through which all subjects are covered. The curriculum is now outstanding and the bold decisions to change it have marked a key turning point in the pupils' achievement and the school's success. In consequence, the provisional results for 2007, show standards that have improved significantly. They are now average in reading and mathematics and significantly above average in writing. This marks good achievement from pupils' below average skills on entering Year 1.

The quality of the school's provision is good and much more rigour has been applied to checking pupils' progress as they move through the school. These tracking procedures are now of good quality, and teachers can accurately pinpoint the next steps for all the pupils to ensure that achievement continues to be good. However, although the quality of teaching is good and pupils thrive in their learning, not all teachers ensure that the work set is consistently challenging for all groups of pupils. Nevertheless, pupils are enthused and encouraged by their teachers, who are committed to their success.

The school places a very high priority on the personal development of its pupils. They are very well cared for and, as a result, are well behaved and polite. They love school and say that their lessons are 'Great fun and help us to learn well'. They contribute well to school life through the school council and have even decided which colours should be used to decorate their toilets.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher's leadership and management are excellent. She has built a strong and supportive team of staff around her and together they have secured a significant improvement in pupils' achievements and standards. Staff are objective, straightforward and rigorous in their self-evaluation and they know what they need to do to consolidate the remarkable improvements in standards over the past year. Subject leaders carry out their role effectively. They have played a strong and key role in the re-designing of the school's curriculum. This demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a suitable understanding of the school but are over-reliant on the headteacher for information. They are not yet in a position to hold the school to account.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of the provision is good. The supportive and nurturing atmosphere created by all the staff ensures that children feel safe and secure. As a result, they flourish in their learning

and achieve well. Even though many children have very poor personal and social skills when they start in the Nursery, even the youngest children are confident and show high levels of involvement in the rich range of activities provided. Staff ensure that there is a good balance between indoor and outdoor activities and they plan cleverly to make sure that children enjoy a range of activities which enable them to make choices for themselves and to be directed to adult-led activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve.
- Strengthen governors' involvement in the life of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although results in national tests over time have been below average, the head's bold leadership, which led to changing the whole structure of the curriculum, has paid dividends. As a result, standards are now average in reading and mathematics and significantly above average in writing. Furthermore, current Year 2 pupils are on track to attain the challenging targets set for them. The school continues with its unremitting drive for improvement because staff realise that pupils can achieve even more. Pupils in Year 1, for example, are now on track to achieve well and to strengthen the upward trend in standards. Standards in writing are particularly strong because teachers are very careful to encourage extended writing and they insist on pupils using a rich range of vocabulary and complex sentence structure.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Parents are unanimous in saying that their children enjoy going to school. The pupils confirm this, 'We love school,' said one. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and pupils know that they can talk to an adult if they have any personal concerns. Pupils feel safe because they know that staff are there to support them. Behaviour in lessons and at break times is good. There has been an improvement in pupils' attendance since the previous inspection and it is now at the national average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are developing a strong commitment to healthy lifestyles through the school's good emphasis on healthy eating and on sporting activities. Their satisfactory skills and abilities to work together amiably and constructively prepare them adequately for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The focus on making learning more stimulating and interesting by making lessons more pupil-focused is a strong feature throughout the school. Staff manage the pupils particularly well and ensure that classrooms provide a calm and purposeful environment. Teachers plan stimulating tasks, which encourage pupils to be actively involved in lessons. Teaching assistants are particularly effective with small groups and they provide good support for pupils who have learning difficulties. Teachers' planning is usually effective. In the best lessons, there are clearly identified objectives and different planned

expectations for specific groups of pupils, particularly those who find learning easy. This helps to ensure that progress is good. However, this is not always the case and, on occasion, progress is not always as fast as it could be because work is too easy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

In the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, the curriculum is of exceptional quality. Unusually, the school has decided to plan its curriculum using the Foundation Stage's six areas of learning rather than National Curriculum subjects. Much care has been taken to ensure that pupils' entitlements to all subjects are taken into account. This innovative approach, based on all work stemming from the termly themes, has had a positive impact on pupils' achievements. This is because the planned activities are based on first-hand, relevant, experiences for pupils. For example, work in the Year 1 class currently centres on the book, *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*. The teacher has cleverly linked activities from all subjects to this theme. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils were learning to divide sets of 10 items of food from the lighthouse keeper's lunch basket and to record their results. In addition, there are plans for a governor, who was a lighthouse keeper, to talk to the pupils about his experiences. Such talks, and the very extensive range of trips and visits which bring learning alive, contribute well to the pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support offered by the school are good. Recent improvements to systems for tracking individual pupils' progress provide a good range of information and now need to be bed down. Pupils' personal development is a particularly high priority for the school and staff respond to pupils' concerns promptly. A parent remarked, 'The school is excellent at making all children feel valued and presents such a warm, safe and stimulating environment.' The school makes very good use of outside agencies to support and guide pupils. The needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are identified early and strategies to support their learning are effective. Those who are at the early stages of learning English are well supported. All current regulations for safeguarding pupils are met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. She has built a very close team of effective staff and is much admired by all in the school community. Her incisive leadership, based on a clear vision for the pupils in the school, has led to dramatic improvements in pupils' achievements. It has also ensured that all staff are working together to improve pupils' achievements. Subject leaders are clear about their responsibilities and their action plans contribute well to the whole school development plan, which is a useful tool for improvement. The headteacher ensures that all staff are directly involved in the school's self-evaluation through careful reviews of improvements. Although the school's self-evaluations are cautious in their overall judgements, staff have a clear and effective understanding of the school's provision and standards. However, governors are not yet in a position to take a full role in the school's evaluations because they do not spend enough time finding out about the school for themselves.

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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 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	3
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	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	3

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?	1
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	1
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

13 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of: King's Ford Infant School and Nursery, Colchester CO2 9AZ

I am writing to let you know how much I enjoyed my visit to your school. You made me very welcome and I understand why it is that you thoroughly enjoy your school and are proud of it.

I was particularly impressed by the way that you play and work together so well. I think that it is brilliant how you all help to make sure that everyone is happy.

Yours is a good school and here are some of the really good things that I found.

- You make good progress in your learning and attain average standards in reading and mathematics and high standards in your writing.
- You told me that behaviour is good, and it is! You thoroughly enjoy your lessons and you play and work together exceptionally well.
- All the adults work hard to make sure that you are very safe and well cared for.
- Your headteacher is doing an excellent job and she is supported well by other members of staff.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and fun and provide an excellent range of activities for you to enjoy.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to work on two things to make your school even better.

- For teachers always to plan lessons to make sure that you all learn equally well, whether you find learning easy or hard.
- For your school governors to come to see you in school more often so that they can check lessons and see for themselves how well you are doing.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and to keep your targets constantly in mind so you can achieve them as quickly as possible.

With best wishes

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector