

Hazelmere Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114745
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311691
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mark Phillips HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Antony Mortimer
Headteacher	Mrs Jenny Firth
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Hawthorn Avenue Colchester Essex CO4 3JP
Telephone number	01206862691
Fax number	01206866405

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Hazelmere is an average size junior school, situated in the St. Andrews ward of Colchester. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and almost all have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above the national average. The number of students with a statement of special educational need is well above average. A high proportion of the pupils are drawn from areas of relatively high social and economic disadvantage. The number of students eligible for a free school meal is well above average. Pupils start school with levels of attainment that are generally below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to teaching and learning, standards in English and mathematics and greater monitoring and evaluation through leadership and management.

Overall achievement is inadequate and standards are too low. Pupils taking Key Stage 2 tests in 2007 reached standards that were well below the national average in English and mathematics and the school did not meet any of its targets for the core subjects of English, mathematics or science. In too many lessons, the progress of many pupils is inadequate. Teaching and learning are inadequate overall because, whilst teachers have sound subject knowledge and there are some examples of good practice, too often there is insufficient consideration of pupils' individual learning needs. In too many lessons, the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties are not challenged or supported enough. Consequently, the pace of learning is too slow and these pupils do not make enough progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all statutory requirements. Appropriate time is given to the core subjects, and there is sufficient provision for information and communication technology, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. A strong aspect to curriculum provision is the range of trips and visits to places such as the Tate gallery, which do much to broaden and enrich pupils' experience and aspirations. A local law firm helps by funding these activities and providing reading mentors, which staff and pupils appreciate.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall, as the result of the satisfactory care, guidance and support given by the school. The school employs a dedicated Home-School Liaison Worker who works hard with other agencies to promote good attendance and behaviour. Although attendance is still below average, it has improved through the school's efforts. A breakfast club encourages morning attendance, but there are still too many latecomers. The home-school association raises much-needed funds for projects such as the 'Trim Trail', which is much enjoyed by pupils.

Last year, there were an extraordinary number of exclusions for incidents of poor behaviour, almost all of which happened outside of lessons. The school has recently introduced a Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme and other strategies to support pupils' personal development. There have been no exclusions so far this year, and teachers say that pupils' behaviour is calmer. The leadership has made good progress in this aspect of the school's work. Behaviour observed during the inspection was satisfactory; nevertheless, some parents do have remaining concerns about bullying. However, pupils told inspectors that a high level of adult supervision at playtimes helps them to feel safe.

The headteacher assumed leadership of the school in January 2007, initially on a temporary basis and then permanently from April 2007. Parents, governors, and the local authority express their full support for her, and recognise her vision for and total commitment to the school. Nevertheless, leadership and management are inadequate overall. The headteacher has not had sufficient mentoring or induction in her new role and her short period as deputy headteacher did not provide her with a wide enough range of experiences. There is presently no deputy headteacher. This role is being covered by two assistant headteachers. However, although this

is a positive strategy for developing school leadership, it has not impacted sufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning.

Overall, the school's performance has declined since the previous inspection. The written self-evaluation is not incisive enough, relies too heavily on the past and so does not accurately reflect the school as it is now. However, the active and honest part that the headteacher, senior staff, and chair of governors played in this inspection showed that they know and understand what the school needs to do to improve. The leadership has produced a satisfactory school improvement plan that identifies and targets the key areas for improvement effectively. The school has demonstrated its capacity to improve through the way particular issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and particularly in improving pupil attendance, attitudes and behaviour. However, there is more to be done to raise standards, and the overall quality and consistency of teaching and learning. The headteacher, assistant heads, chair of governors, and the local authority recognise that external support is required to help the school move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, so that all pupils achieve to their full potential in tests and in lessons.
- Improve the planning and teaching of lessons so that they focus on the individual learning needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that leadership and management at all levels - including governors - plays an effective role in managing, monitoring, evaluating, and challenging the school's work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Last year's Year 6 pupils entered the school with standards below average. In the 2007 tests, results in mathematics were well below national averages and less than half the pupils achieved the expected national level in writing. Standards were well below average in English in 2007, as they have been in mathematics for three years. Standards were better in science, but were still below average.

Pupils currently in Years 3, 4, and 5 joined Hazelmere with higher standards than in previous years, and more in line with the national average. Data alone would show that pupils just make satisfactory progress by the time they leave school although this has slightly fallen over the last three years. However, in too many lessons there is insufficient challenge or support for pupils' different needs and abilities. This leads to many pupils making inadequate progress in these lessons and an overall judgement of inadequate achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Last year there were a few incidents of racist name-calling but these were challenged and dealt with rigorously. There has been none of these incidents reported this year. Pupils raise funds for a range of charities, and this gives them an understanding of life for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to be healthy through sport and exercise but their healthy eating habits are not as well-formed.

Pupils have a satisfactory say in the running of the school through the school council and contribute well to local community events, although some still find it difficult to relate appropriately to each other and to adults. Skills for their future economic well-being are inadequately developed; in particular, they have underdeveloped skills in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Although some teaching is good, its overall quality is inadequate because too many pupils make insufficient progress in lessons and over time. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning, or develop their social skills through working collaboratively with each other.

Marking is inconsistent and does not always help pupils understand how they can do better although there are some notable examples of good practice. Assessments in English, mathematics, and science are not frequent enough. The school uses a target tracker programme to help with assessment, but this is not used effectively to inform lesson planning. The school has started to plan assessment opportunities in foundation subjects and has documentation in place but again this is not yet used consistently in practice. This means that teachers are unable to plan work that matches the needs and interests of pupils, which slows their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. There is good provision for sporting activities and the school has competed successfully in local and district competitions. There is also a strong tradition of musical performance through instrumental lessons and the school choir. There is adequate provision of curriculum activities in the foundation subjects through discrete lessons and cross-curricular projects although, as with core subjects, there is insufficient use of robust learning objectives to match activities to pupils' needs and interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All statutory requirements for child protection and safeguarding are soundly and effectively in place. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils have their own targets in English, mathematics, and science, which are communicated to parents in regular reports and parents' evenings. However, these are not always understood by pupils. The special needs coordinator has individual education plans in place for all pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. However, teachers do not use this information consistently in their planning to ensure that there is adequate support for these pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Monitoring and evaluation of lessons is by the headteacher; subject coordinators do not monitor or evaluate the effectiveness of teaching in their curriculum areas. Lesson observations are not rigorous or incisive enough and do not give enough regard to the quality of pupils' learning as

the result of teaching. Monitoring of teaching has therefore not had sufficient impact on strengthening the school's provision.

The new chair of governors took over the role in July 2007 after a period of some instability. There is a core of loyal and dedicated governors. However, there remain a number of vacancies on the governing body including parent, staff, community, and local authority representatives. While they meet their statutory obligations, governors have not sufficiently challenged the school's work or played an active enough role in target setting or self-evaluation. Financial matters are managed efficiently, however, falling rolls mean that money is tight and there are some constraints. The school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

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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?	4
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

30 November 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Hazelmere Junior School, Essex CO4 3JP

I am writing to thank you very much for the part that you played in our inspection of your school. It was good to meet you. We particularly enjoyed talking to you while we all enjoyed the delicious roast dinner on Wednesday. I also enjoyed listening to your singing in assembly, and seeing your 'Ask the Teacher' assembly. The questions that you asked were extremely challenging and showed us how keen you are to learn!

We were very pleased to see that you behaved well in the lessons that we visited. We know that some pupils have not always behaved this well, particularly at playtimes, so we encourage you to continue doing your very best to get on with each other to help make your school a nice place to learn and play in. It is also important for you to come to school every day, and on time, so that you can learn as much as possible and have fun with your friends.

To help your school improve, we think that there could be more challenging work for some of you and there should be more opportunities for you to work in groups and on your own. We want you to achieve better standards, particularly in your mathematics and English. Your teachers will be working extremely hard to provide these challenges for you, with Mrs Firth and the senior teachers leading the way.

As you can see, everybody has an important part to play at Hazelmere. We're asking you, your parents, and your teachers to work together to make things even better. We are also asking some people from Essex County Council to help, and they will be visiting the school regularly to work with you.

Thank you once again. Remember to work hard, behave well, come to school on time - and aim high!

Yours sincerely,

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector