

Home Farm Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114752
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311696
Inspection date	29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs P Higham
Headteacher	Mrs M P Oliver
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Shelley Road Colchester Colchester Essex CO3 4JL
Telephone number	01206 577430
Fax number	01206 369563

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The following issues were investigated: the pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and how well the school's leadership promotes high standards. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, the pupils' work, discussion with them, the staff and a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. Inspectors found no evidence that the school's own assessments of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized, over-subscribed primary school. Approximately half the pupils come from outside the local area. The majority of pupils come from socially and economically advantaged families. Attainment on entry is generally above average. Almost all pupils are White British; a very small number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Overall, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, but the number of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is just above average. At the time of the inspection, over half of the classes (four out of seven) were being taught by teachers on temporary contracts, mainly to cover long-term staff absence.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Home Farm Primary provides an acceptable standard of education. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From their above-average attainment in Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers. Standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are above average by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6. However, pupils' progress is uneven because teaching is inconsistent across the school. School data shows that pupils' attainment falls to average at the end of Year 2 and begins to rise again to above average in Key Stage 2. Inspection evidence confirms this dip in attainment that is due largely to underachievement of more able pupils in Year 2. The work they are given is not matched well enough to their abilities. Good teaching in later years ensures that Year 6 pupils are on course to attain the appropriate targets set for them based on their starting points.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They enjoy school and all it has to offer and demonstrate this through their good attendance and high take-up of clubs and sports activities. Pupils are generally well behaved and keen to learn. Pupils are currently developing good skills in English, mathematics and ICT (ICT) towards the end of Key Stage 2 which, together with good social skills, equip them well for their future. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to lead a healthy life style and stay safe through the school's well-developed programme of personal, social and health education, as well as cycle proficiency courses.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with good teaching in Years 4 and 6. In these particular year groups relationships are excellent, teachers set very high expectations and plan work to match pupils' abilities. These teachers make efficient use of good assessment and pupil progress tracking systems to set challenging targets and measure their pupils' progress towards meeting these. In other year groups, the outcomes of the tracking systems are not fully understood so that teachers, especially those new to the school, do not always have a clear enough picture of what pupils can achieve. Inspection evidence shows that teaching for pupils in Year 1 is at least satisfactory. In Year 2, it ranges from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. This slows the progress made by Key Stage 1 pupils, especially the more able who are generally not being stretched well enough. The school recognises the need to ensure that teachers, especially temporary teachers, are helped to improve the planning and delivery of their lessons.

The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths in the good range of visits, visitors and clubs. Good links with sports partnerships promote pupils' fitness and sporting abilities successfully. The school's involvement with an ICT project has a positive impact on Year 6 pupils' confidence and ability in using their personal digital assistants (PDAs) in lessons for example, to use a thesaurus and dictionary to deepen their understanding of imagery in a poem. The school judged its curriculum to be good. While teachers are beginning to make relevant links between subjects to develop topics or themes, this type of planning is not evident in all classes.

The school has strengths in the good care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety meet current requirements. Good links with outside agencies, sports partnerships and a school in China have a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of school and their good personal development. Pupils say they like the school because 'it includes everyone and no one is left out'. Parents are supportive of the school

but a significant minority feel that, although their views are sought, they are not taken into account.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness accurately identifies where further improvements are needed. As a result of effective strategies, standards at the end of Year 6 have been sustained since the last inspection. The impact of leadership and management on standards at the end of Key Stage 1 has been less effective. The school is aware of issues related to the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 and has identified what needs to be done. The successful impact of strategies on standards in other year groups demonstrates the school has satisfactory potential to improve. The headteacher delegates many aspects of leadership to her senior leaders. The impact of this team has been limited by the long term absence of two senior staff. Accurate judgements of the quality of teaching and learning have been made but not in detail in the case of more recent temporary staff.

Governors are well organised and supportive of the school. They have a good overview of the work of the school and take part in discussing its effectiveness.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage has a temporary teacher and provides an adequate start to children's education. Children are happy and feel safe in school. They make sound progress in developing basic literacy and mathematical skills. The current provision is satisfactory. The outside area is not being used due to building work. It is uninviting and small thus limiting the opportunities children have to learn and develop their physical skills outdoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make effective use of assessment information to ensure that pupils make consistent and good progress across the school, especially at Key Stage 1.
- Make sure that teachers, especially temporary teachers, are supported so that all teaching comes up to that of the best.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
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?	3
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?	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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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

30 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Home Farm Primary School, Colchester, CO3 4JL

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. Our particular thanks to those of you who kindly gave up part of your lunchtime to talk to us. We found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share with you my findings.

Home Farm is a satisfactory school. You told us that you like coming to school and that you feel safe. We could see that all the adults know you well and take good care of you.

Teaching is satisfactory and some is good, particularly in Years 4 and 6 where your teachers expect you to work very hard and you make good progress. In Year 6, your behaviour in lessons is excellent. I could see that standards are above average and you are very confident using your personal digital assistants (PDAs) in lessons. Many of you make good progress in this year group because your teacher keeps a close eye on how well you are getting on.

I have asked the headteacher, senior teachers and governors to make sure they check more closely how well the school is doing so that it can be improved further. They need to do these checks so that you make good progress in Key Stage 1 so that all of your lessons really help you learn. I hope that you will always try your hardest to make sure this happens.

Thank you again for your helpfulness.

Best wishes,

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector