

Hamstel Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114770
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LA
Inspection number	311706
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	463
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ron Wright
Headteacher	Mr Paul Gwilliam
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2004
School address	Hamstel Road Southend-on-sea Essex SS2 4PQ
Telephone number	01702468048
Fax number	01702602466

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Hamstel Junior School is much larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also higher than average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the number who speak English as an additional language are below average.

The school has Investors in People status, the Healthy Schools Award, the International Award, the National Association for Able Children in Education Challenge Award and the Active Sports Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hamstel Junior School is a satisfactory school. Pupils' attainment when they join the school is just below average. Prior to 2007, standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 had risen to become broadly average. Standards fell in 2007, due to a significant drop in results in English, particularly for boys. This was caused in part by particular barriers relating to the group of pupils, but also by a combination of other factors. One was a lack of recognition by staff of the rate of progress pupils should make year-on-year, another was a lack of acknowledgement on the part of all staff that they share responsibility for pupils' progress. A further factor was the lack of rigour in eradicating inconsistencies in teaching. However current standards throughout the school are now just below average and, due to action taken to improve progress, pupils now make satisfactory progress. Staff now have the skills needed to track pupils' progress, and are accountable through performance management for making sure pupils make satisfactory progress. However, there is no challenge to accelerate progress and enable pupils to make the best possible progress. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory and promotes satisfactory learning, but teaching is too inconsistent.

Curriculum provision is good, and particularly well enriched. The school is now making stronger links between subjects in order to improve standards in writing. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. An appropriate emphasis is placed on developing pupils' social and emotional skills, and there are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. Cultural development is exceptional, due the strong emphasis on forging links with schools overseas. Care, guidance and support are good. Particularly good provision is made for meeting the specific needs of pupils, be they learning difficulties, dexterity problems, or those of able, gifted and talented pupils. However, within lessons, insufficient attention is given to meeting the needs of pupils through the planning of carefully targeted activities, and they are not given sufficient guidance to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and senior leaders, including governors, give direction to the school. School self-evaluation has accurately identified areas for improvement, but over the last year not all leaders were able to fulfil their roles effectively. Whilst senior leaders accurately identified the lack of consistency in teaching, too little has been done to ensure consistency. Although middle leaders have the skills to improve the quality of teaching, there is insufficient urgency in making sure that they have the opportunity to do so.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve, and gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Senior leaders and governors need to ensure that there is consistency in the quality of teaching and in the use of agreed teaching practices.
- Ensure class teaching meets the needs of all pupils, through carefully targeted activities.
- Ensure all pupils know how to improve their work.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6, having risen since the last inspection to become in line with average, fell in 2007 in all subjects, with standards in English being significantly low. Standards in mathematics were just below average and in science were average. Fewer pupils reached the higher Level 5 in all subjects. Standards reached by boys were lower than those reached by girls. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties on 'school action plus' and the few with statements of special education need achieved standards well below those of similar pupils nationally. Pupil achievement was too low due to significant underachievement in English. In addition, the school identified that there was underachievement throughout the school, particularly in mathematics.

However, current standards are satisfactory in all year groups, demonstrating that pupils are now making satisfactory progress towards their targets. There are no variations between groups of learners, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well, like school and enjoy their lessons. This is because staff are skilled at encouraging good behaviour and provide an exciting range of opportunities which are broadening pupils' outlook on life. The excellence of the school's international dimension (via strong links with schools in India and China) means pupils have an in-depth understanding of how others live, and the problems they face. Activities include the chance to learn Mandarin and sharing work with partner schools through a computer presentation on the history of the Olympics. This aspect of school life is the jewel in the crown of the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. Pupils have a good sense of community responsibility and take their roles as peer mediators and prefects seriously. These jobs help maintain high standards of behaviour and ensure pupils keep safe and happy at play times. As far as health is concerned, they enjoy good amounts of sport, especially swimming. Whilst they understand healthy eating, pupils find putting this into practice more difficult, despite having a healthy tuck shop. They leave school as well-rounded young people, able to face the challenges of secondary education with confidence. Attendance has improved and is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall although across the school there is a very mixed picture in which teaching ranges from inadequate to outstanding. Teachers work well together and plan carefully, ensuring that pupils' learning builds successfully on their earlier experiences thereby enabling them to make satisfactory progress. However, they do not always plan for different groups in lessons, including within the English and mathematics sets. A particular strength is the good relationships based on mutual respect between adults and children. Most teachers make good use of probing questions to check understanding and ensure that learning moves on briskly. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan work that challenges them to do their very best. They provide opportunities for them to reflect and

comment on their own work and that of their friends, for example through the effective use of 'talk partners'. Teaching is less effective when it is too slow to engage all pupils and occasionally strategies to manage the isolated examples of unsatisfactory behaviour are not effective. In some lessons teaching assistants are not actively involved in pupils' learning at all stages of the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum demonstrating its commitment to meet the particular needs of pupils. Its success is to be seen in the high levels of enjoyment described by pupils. Clear and well-structured guidance for staff is helpfully available on the network of teachers' computers to support their cooperative planning. This ensures that pupils in each age group enjoy similar learning opportunities. The setting arrangements in English and mathematics in those lessons where teachers plan for different groups, and the carefully planned intervention strategies help to meet particular identified needs of individual pupils. All pupils learn French, and there is good provision for sport. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of additional experiences, including the international dimension, a good variety of extra-curricular activities and regular visits and visitors. Themed events such as the school's World War Two museum and the Roman Day help to bring learning to life by providing practical hands-on activities that capture pupils' interest. Good use is made of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme to promote pupils' self-esteem, independence and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The wide range of ways to help pupils overcome issues that could prevent them learning are working well. Parents and pupils recognise the high quality of care, and relationships with families are strong. One parent said, 'The school has been so helpful ... they have made my child more confident and continue to support him daily'. The new system whereby pupils showing signs of underachieving are provided with specially tailored programmes to help them catch up, is a positive move. Early indications are that this is having a beneficial effect. Child protection procedures are secure and systems to help keep pupils safe meet requirements.

The level of academic guidance reveals more of a variable picture. In some classes, and particularly in Year 5, pupils receive high quality guidance in a number of innovative ways, which are helping them improve their work. In other classes, guidance is weaker. Marking of work shows the same variability; really helpful in some classes, especially in English, but elsewhere, merely ticks and praise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Senior leaders give clear direction in addressing barriers to learning but there is a lack of rigour in ensuring that middle leaders are enabled to fulfil their roles. Whilst the focus on the international dimension is laudable, and the school can rightly be proud of the awards it has received, senior leaders have not had a sufficiently strong focus on ensuring that inconsistencies in practice are ironed out.

The school improvement plan accurately pinpoints areas for development and the actions planned have the potential to drive improvement. Senior leaders recognised the need to improve pupils' rates of progress throughout the school. By enabling staff to track pupils' progress and making them accountable for doing so, and by introducing strategies to improve progress, the issue of underachievement has been dealt with. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weakness. They are taking action to enable them to monitor improvement more closely and to hold the school to account more effectively.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3

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?	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?	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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamstel Junior School, Southend-on-Sea SS2 4PQ

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for making us so welcome, for being so helpful when you talked to us, and for showing us your work. We think that you behave well, are friendly and polite and we were impressed by the way those of you with responsibilities carried them out.

We think that yours is a satisfactory school, and that there are lots of good things going on. You are well looked after, and the school works hard to help those of you with a particular need. We also think that you have a very good knowledge of the lives of people in other countries.

There are some things that we feel Mr Gwilliam and the other teachers need to do to improve your school. The school leaders and governors need to make sure that some of the teaching improves, so all lessons are as good as each other and are planned to make sure you all do your best. They need to improve the marking of your work so that you know how to improve. We think these things will help you to enjoy school even more, and help you make better progress.

With best wishes

Heather Weston HMI