

Holt Farm Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114879
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311739
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Pearce
Headteacher	Mr Robin Goodier
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Ashingdon Road Rochford Essex SS4 1RS
Telephone number	01702 544058
Fax number	01702 530076

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large infant school which serves families who mainly live nearby, although over a third come from outside the school's catchment area. The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. Children enter the school with attainment that is below that usually seen in children of this age. The percentage with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. Most pupils are White British. A small number come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a few of these are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

The school has gained the sports Activemark and Healthy Schools Award in recognition of its work.

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 where pupils are happy and enjoy their learning. The warm and friendly atmosphere, together with good teaching, encourages pupils to do well. By the time they leave school, standards are often above average. Parents are very positive about the school, as seen in the following typical comment: 'I do genuinely feel that Holt Farm is a safe, happy school with good quality teaching. I have a very high opinion of the headteacher and all staff.' Good improvements since the last inspection, together with good leadership from the headteacher, the commitment of staff and governors, and support from parents, indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Teaching is good because activities maintain pupils' interest and they feel able to succeed. The pace of learning is usually good and pupils rise to the challenges set. Several initiatives to improve writing, mathematics and science are clearly enhancing pupils' progress and raising standards. This is ensuring that Year 2 national assessment results are improving. In a few lessons, however, teachers do not use the good information they gain from assessing pupils' work to ensure that the tasks set match the full range of pupils' abilities. This slows the rate of these pupils' progress. Teachers plan well for those who find learning difficult. The good curriculum and the outstanding range of popular clubs, have had a significant impact on motivating pupils, developing their attitudes to learning and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

Staff provide good care, guidance and support which ensure that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They quickly understand what is right and wrong and their good behaviour contributes much to a climate in which all can thrive. Pupils readily make friends and develop a caring attitude towards others. These skills are used well to fulfil a number of roles, which develop independence. Pupils have a strong understanding of the factors that contribute to their personal safety. They play safely, act responsibly and know where to find help when needed. These aspects, combined with pupils' good progress, help to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Effective leadership, management and governance result in the school providing good value for money. The headteacher gives good direction to school improvement and involves everyone in the decision-making process. However, subject leaders do not regularly evaluate information about pupils' progress and standards. This means that they are not fully involved in the setting of targets and identification of areas for improvement. Apart from this, good self-evaluation procedures mirror the drive for improvement and help the school community to reflect on how well it is doing and what needs to be improved. Judgements match well with inspection findings.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's learning and development are good. They settle well because good links with parents are encouraged and routines are clear. Staff place a high priority on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills and this successful work helps to support children's learning across all areas. Behaviour is good because stimulating activities maintain children's interests. Children gain confidence as they work and play well with others and enjoy school. Through regular observations and assessments, staff gain a good understanding of the children's needs and give effective support. Generally, work is matched well to pupils' range of abilities. Recent improvements to the way children are taught to write is helping to develop their confidence

and raise standards. Because of good provision, children achieve well so that by the time they enter Year 1 most are working at the levels expected for their age. Leadership and management are good. Good liaison between Reception and Year 1 ensures a smooth transition and a continuation of effective learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers consistently provide work that is matched well to pupils' abilities.
- Ensure subject leaders develop their roles of monitoring, evaluation and target setting through more precise use of data.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities, including those who need additional help with their learning, achieve well and make good progress. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Over the last three years, there has been an improving trend in standards overall and pupils in Year 2 are currently working at levels above those expected for their age. Standards are particularly strong in mathematics, and standards in science have improved significantly since the last inspection. Strengths in these two subjects reflect the focus staff place on developing pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills. Standards in writing have improved in response to a range of strategies recently adopted by the school. Standards in reading are slightly above average. A higher than average percentage of pupils gain the higher Level 3 in national assessments which reflects good provision for more capable pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils understand the need for rules in school; appreciate the rewards for keeping them and the consequences of breaking them. They value the privilege of being 'Lunchtime Superstars'. Their responsibilities as school councillors and as class monitors and their support for some local charities all help to encourage a good sense of belonging throughout the school community. Pupils' moral and social development is good but their spiritual awareness and knowledge of living in a diverse society are not as strong. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is good and they understand why bullying is unacceptable. Pupils show respect for adults and each other and the positive relationships in school create a harmonious community that supports the good progress pupils make. Pupils enjoy their work and most are committed to doing their best. Attendance is now just below average and the school is working hard to improve it. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good use of interactive whiteboards and other information and communication technology (ICT) maintains pupils' interests and develop their skills effectively. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to ask questions that stimulate pupils' thinking and increase their understanding. Pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well through encouragement to explain their views and answer their partners' questions. Teachers have a clear understanding of what they want pupils to learn and plan lessons where learning builds well over time. They

assess pupils' work and progress well and write useful comments in books. In some lessons, the good information gained from this assessment is not used effectively enough to provide work that is well-matched to pupils' capabilities. However, the use of assessment to plan work for those identified with additional learning needs is good and gives clear guidance for further learning. Teaching assistants work well with pupils by supporting them in class or through providing additional work programmes for those who are finding reading, writing and mathematics difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Lessons are well-focused on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills within a broad and interesting curriculum. Recent improvements have helped raise standards in writing. Careful thought has gone into providing a two-year topic cycle plan to meet the needs of the class which has mixed ages. This plan is currently being revised to strengthen opportunities to use literacy skills across different subjects. Work is in hand to identify similar links in mathematics and ICT. An interesting personal, social, health and citizenship education programme helps to promote pupils' good personal development and awareness of others' needs. The school has worked hard to provide an outstanding number and range of extra-curricular clubs such as French, Experiments, Craft, Modeling, Drama and Sport to interest and challenge pupils. These are very popular and almost 90 per cent of pupils have attended one or more clubs in the last year. A number of interesting visits to the local council, a sea life centre, a farm and park, and visitors to the school such as a storyteller and science theatre group enhance provision well. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties is planned carefully and evaluated regularly to ensure it meets their needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The needs of individual pupils are at the centre of the school's work. This is a strength, identified by several parents. Child protection procedures are clear and understood. Pupils know who to go to if they feel upset. Careful attention is given to health and safety, including minimising possible risks. All adults are appropriately police checked. Teachers quickly identify the needs of vulnerable pupils and those who find learning difficult. Consequently, no time is lost in ensuring that these pupils get the support they require, such as bereavement counselling, behaviour management and art therapy. Some of this support is provided through good links with local agencies. Although initiatives to monitor pupils' attendance are thorough, they have not yet had sufficient impact on improving overall rates. Procedures to track and record pupils' progress are good but information is not always used effectively to set learning targets that pupils understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides a good lead to colleagues, who work as a strong team sharing his vision for the school. Good systems are in place to check how well the school is doing and identify what it could do better. These have been instrumental in supporting the school's drive for continued improvement and have resulted in significant developments since the last inspection. Successes include improvements to the curriculum and

teaching, which have led to higher standards in writing, mathematics and science. Staff take on a variety of responsibilities successfully, but the role of subject leaders is not fully developed. Governors have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness by keeping a check on how pupils are doing through asking questions about standards and achievement.

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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	2
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	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	2

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?	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?	2
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	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Holt Farm Infant School, Rochford SS4 1RS.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and seeing what you do and learn. You and your parents think that Holt Farm is a good school and we agree. If you read on you will see some of the things we found out.

- You work hard and the work you do is better than we often see from children of your age. We are very pleased that your writing has improved a lot recently, and also your mathematics and science. Although many of you read well, perhaps you could try to read more to make your reading even better.
- You really enjoy school because it is a happy, interesting place.
- Most of you come to school regularly and on time. Well done! It is such a pity that a few of you arrive late and miss lessons. Perhaps you could remind those who bring you to school how important it is to get there on time so you do not miss any learning.
- You behave well, get on with each other and make good friends.
- You really enjoy the clubs after school and going on visits to local places of interest, such as the farm.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. We were pleased to hear that you would go to a member of staff if you were worried.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well with others to ensure that you receive the support you need, particularly those of you who find learning difficult.

Mr Goodier, staff and governors are all helping to improve the school. They are keen to make it even better and the teachers in charge of subjects have agreed to check more on how well you are doing. Then they will use the information from this to find out what they can improve and teachers will make sure that your work is always at the right level. We know you will respond well to their efforts and try hard.

We left your school feeling sure that it will continue to improve and wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith Lead inspector