

Writtle Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114917
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311755
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Marianne Harris

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	157
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ralph Bray
Headteacher	Mrs Eileen Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lodge Road Writtle Chelmsford Essex CM1 3HZ
Telephone number	01245 420963
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average and draws pupils from a mainly White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is a little above that normally seen. These needs vary from moderate learning difficulties to autism and a few pupils have physical needs. The school has provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with a privately run Breakfast Club and Pre-school that use the school site. When children join the school they have skills and knowledge that are close to those expected for children of their age.

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 parents are very supportive and pupils feel safe and welcomed. Good leadership and management have resulted in a school where all are valued. The headteacher has been successful in building a knowledgeable team of teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently the needs of all pupils are met and appropriate support given when required. Governors know the school well and understand its strengths and areas that need improving. The school has improved well since the last inspection and its capacity for further development is good.

A successful priority of the school is to provide good care, guidance and support for all pupils. As a result pupils' personal development and well-being are also good and they understand about keeping healthy and safe. They learn much about the life and cultures of the local and wider community. Pupils are particularly proud of the money they raise for local and national charities.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards overall are above average, although pupils have historically not achieved as well in reading as they have in writing and mathematics. This is currently being tackled by the school, although the full benefit of the adopted reading programme has not been felt by pupils in Year 2 because the initiative was introduced to children in the EYFS and then Year 1. The school has plans to fully evaluate the programme to make sure that there has been success in raising standards in reading.

The wide and varied curriculum provided by the school engages the attention of pupils and encourages them to learn. Teaching and learning are good and the senior leadership team has been successful in monitoring these. Lessons are well planned and pupils are set work that is based on accurate assessments. In some classes pupils are beginning to assess their own work with the help of the teacher. The discussions at the end of each lesson are used to talk about what pupils have understood and what they feel they need to do next in order to consolidate what they already know. This leads to pupils developing independent skills and taking some responsibility for their own learning. They are confident when choosing activities and persevere at tasks. However, these strengths are not consistent across the school and in some lessons pupils are directed rather than given choices and opportunities to discuss what they have learnt.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the EYFS make good progress and achieve well because learning is interesting and stimulating. There are many activities that cover all areas of learning for children in the EYFS and there is a good balance between tasks that are led by adults and those children choose for themselves. A particularly strong aspect is the confidence the children have to plan the activities they wish to pursue. Staff are good at encouraging children to take part in as many activities as possible and recording which ones they have joined in. Children learn early reading and writing skills particularly effectively as the school has adopted a programme that systematically teaches letters and sounds. The welfare of the children is given a high priority and the thorough assessment system ensures that their progress is tracked well. Children make good progress in their personal development, settling into school quickly and making friends easily. The EYFS is well led and managed with all staff working together well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Monitor the reading programme to ensure that all pupils achieve as well in reading as they do in writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity to develop independent learning skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Across the school pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 2 pupils have reached standards that are above average. This has been the trend over the recent past in writing, mathematics and science. Standards in reading have fluctuated and the school has accurately identified this as an issue. A programme to raise standards in reading has been adopted, it has shown good results and standards are rising rapidly. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress because they are supported effectively in lessons. Those with physical needs are fully included in the life of the school so that they, too, achieve well. Standards in other subjects are also higher than those usually seen, with pupils being confident when using information and communication technology and producing some good art work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a positive attitude towards learning. They behave well in classes and around the school. They want to take responsibility and participate in the school community through initiatives such as the school council and supporting pupils with disabilities. Pupils contribute to the local community well and raise funds for national and international charities. These include 'Children in Need' and 'Farm Africa'. They have a good understanding of healthy living and staying safe. They are keen to take part in after school clubs and know the importance of physical activities, drinking water and eating healthily. Although attendance is similar to the national average, the great majority of pupils enjoy school. Several commented they like school because 'You have to work hard and there are lots of clubs'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well through their work in art and music and they are gaining a good understanding of other ways of life and cultures. Pupils get along well and enjoy playing and learning together, although their capability as independent learners is work in progress. Pupils' skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, together with the ability to work with others are developing well. As a result, they are well prepared for their next school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good planning and sharing the purpose of each lesson are particularly strong aspects of teaching in the school. Pupils know what they are going to learn and, in most cases, are encouraged to assess for themselves how well they have done. Discussion sessions are used effectively to recap on learning or introduce new subjects. In some lessons, however, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to learn independently. Teaching assistants are skilled at providing good support for pupils with additional needs and know just what is needed if a child is having difficulties settling into class. Basic skills are taught effectively with nationally recognised programmes being used to help pupils with their reading and writing. Teachers have embraced

these initiatives enthusiastically and consequently standards are rising as pupils become more confident in spelling, reading and writing simple words.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is rich and varied. There are many extra activities that enrich pupils' learning, and parents comment on the variety of clubs and visits. These include cookery, sports and many musical opportunities. Pupils participate keenly in the local music festival, performing with other schools in an extravaganza at the end of the spring term. There is a waiting list for most extra activities and the school makes sure that all of the pupils who want to join in have the chance to do so. Pupils' personal development and well-being is promoted effectively through discussion sessions and opportunities for pupils to explore growing up. Learning is further enriched by the range of visitors who support lessons, in history, for example. Visits also extend the pupils' knowledge of the local area as well as helping them understand about subjects such as art and geography.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are committed to ensuring the pupils develop their independence and enjoy learning. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for. Because relationships are good, pupils are confident in approaching adults and know who to ask for help. Arrangements for child protection and for safeguarding pupils are robust and fully meet the current requirements. Risk assessments and equipment checks are undertaken regularly. Assessment procedures are thorough. The information is used well at class and whole school level to target support. As a result, pupils are making good progress. Links with outside agencies to provide additional support are good. Consequently, pupils with learning needs receive the help that they need to enable them to make good progress. Pupils know their targets in reading, writing and in mathematics and receive appropriate guidance from their teachers and support staff. Links with the junior school are good. This makes the transfer process easier for the pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders and managers know the school well. They provide clear direction for the work of the school and effectively promote the pupils' personal development. They monitor and evaluate the school's performance thoroughly and use the information to identify appropriate priorities for improvements and to set challenging targets. Relationships with pupils and with their parents are good. The vast majority of parents speak highly of the school. One wrote 'I have been struck with the caring attitude of the school and the enthusiasm of the teachers'. The school has good links with the local community and effectively fosters pupils' understanding of other ways of life. Governors are supportive of the school and many visit regularly. Resources are used effectively to provide a rich curriculum and to enhance the learning environment.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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	2
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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Writtle Infant School, Writtle, CM1 3HZ

Thank you for welcoming us into school recently and for telling us about your work. We are now writing to let you know what we found out.

Many of you spoke about how good your school is and we agree. Your teachers work hard and make learning fun. We noticed the many different activities you have in each lesson and how hard you worked. Some of you have the opportunity to discuss your work and think about how well you have learnt. We have asked your teachers to make sure that all of you have a chance to talk about your work and help you become even better learners.

You are well behaved and very sensible. We were impressed with your fundraising and how you helped each other in school. Many parents wrote and told us of the clubs that are available and your headteacher said that there is a waiting list for most activities.

We noticed that most of you make good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. We know that you have recently had a different way of learning letters, sounds and words and think that this is going to help with your reading skills. We have asked Mrs. Thomas to look carefully at this to make sure that you all make good progress, so keep trying hard.

Once again, thank you for talking to us. We wish you good luck in the future.

Best wishes

Marianne Harris

Lead inspector