

# Powers Hall Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114944
<b>Local Authority</b>	ESSEX LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	311768
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jill Bavin

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	213
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Rod Lane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Claire Edwards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	Spa Road Witham Essex CM8 1NA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01376 512605
<b>Fax number</b>	01376 501054

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an infant school serving an area of some disadvantage. There are very few children from minority ethnic groups and even fewer who are learning English as an additional language. The school includes special provision for children with significant speech, language and communication needs, all of whom are boys. This accounts for the higher than average proportion of children with statements of special educational need. The school is emerging from an extended period of significant staff changes. Many teachers are new to the school and to the profession.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school's effectiveness is good. It provides good value for money despite a recent difficult period of many staff changes. Since the current headteacher's appointment, standards have improved and pupils are achieving well, whatever their starting points. Parents recognise and appreciate this, as one wrote about her son, 'he has made great progress'. Most children join the school with lower levels of skill than expected for their age. Because of good teaching across the school they begin to catch up during the Foundation Stage and their good progress continues in Years 1 and 2.

In 2007 children reached close to average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Current Year 2 children are on track to sustain this good level of progress and reach broadly average standards by the end of the year. The proportion of pupils reaching higher than average literacy and numeracy skills gradually increases as they get older. The school is responding to this success by adjusting teaching strategies and by providing special events to meet the needs of higher attaining pupils. At this stage the school is not using regular programmes of work designed to extend the challenge further for them. The school takes close account of children's needs by providing a good balance of activities that support children's personal development and also focus on key literacy, mathematical and technological skills. However, activities that help children to develop fluent and legible handwriting are relatively limited. Pastoral care and children's personal development are good. Because of clear and consistent guidance children become increasingly interested in learning and adept at working together.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides a strong steer and a robust focus on continually raising standards and achievement. She has forged close links with other professionals and made good use of these partnerships in her drive for school improvement. Information and aspirations are shared effectively. Governors have risen to increased expectations and provide her with a good level of support and challenge. Subject leaders, who are mostly new to their roles, are still dependent upon the headteacher to initiate and lead change as the school develops. New procedures for checking how well each child is doing are extremely thorough and are used to set challenging targets for children. This is a school that knows itself well and given the good extent of recent improvement, is well placed for further development.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Good teaching and suitable activities mean that children make good progress in the Nursery and in Reception. Adults consistently set a good example to children and provide them with secure routines and expectations, so they quickly settle to learning. Recent re-organisation that allows all the Reception children to share space and resources works well; this means that adults often work with a small group of children who share similar needs. The development of the provision to increasingly reflect the latest national guidance has been led and managed well. Senior managers recognise that while children have satisfactory access to learning outside, full use is not made of the outside space for all areas of learning.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a more comprehensive range of activities to support children's skills in handwriting across the school.
- Ensure that challenging activities are regularly and consistently provided for higher attaining pupils.
- Extend the role of subject leaders so that they drive improvement in their areas of responsibility.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Achievement is good and has improved recently. This is because the school now has a thorough and accurate record of what children can do and should be aiming for. Because this information is shared and teachers take account of it in their planning, children make good progress in lessons. Last year children reached close to average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Current Year 2 children are on track to sustain the recent improvements and reach broadly average standards by the end of the year. The vast majority of children reach expected levels of computer skills by the end of Year 2. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Children with learning difficulties make good progress given their starting points.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Children's personal development is good. Most children arrive punctually and enjoy their time in school. Attendance is close to the national figure. Children develop effective social skills and mostly show a considerable interest in lessons. Throughout the school, children become increasingly sensitive to others, and increasingly co-operative with each other. They grow to recognise well how their health and welfare depend on choices, including what they eat and do. Children feel safe in school and their responsible behaviour contributes to productive relationships. They develop good self-esteem; take an interest in the life of the school and increasingly in the wider community and local activities. Many develop respect for the traditions of other cultural groups. Some willingly accept responsibilities on the school council, as play-leaders or in activities such as gardening and recycling. Children's overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their basic skills and range of knowledge provide a good basis for the next stage of their education and future well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school is successfully raising standards and achievement through improved teaching. Teachers work and plan in year groups, sharing information about what children already know and ideas about how to extend learning for children of different abilities. Consequently children are accustomed to having a target that may differ from their friend's. Teachers give children useful feedback about their work and constructive pointers for what they need to do next. Increasingly children are becoming involved in judging their own learning. Adults and children enjoy relationships of mutual respect, which helps children to

concentrate closely and try hard. Adults are skilled at using a variety of approaches and practical activities to keep children interested and motivated. Teaching assistants make an invaluable contribution to children's learning, especially those who find learning difficult, although they are sometimes an under-used resource in Key Stage 1.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and staff lay plans to ensure progress from year to year. Children's needs are recognised through an emphasis on literacy and numeracy and good provision for personal, health and social education. Varied and practical activities in lessons help children to progress well through the school. Increasingly, the school is helping its pupils to reach higher standards by making more links between subjects. Occasional special provision is made for the highest attaining pupils but this is not systematic and regular. Staff have started successfully to improve the structure and content of pupils' writing, but there is too little attention to early and on-going development of the skills needed for writing that is both legible and fluent. The curriculum is enhanced well by a suitable range of well-chosen clubs and special events that capture children's interest and encourage regular exercise and teamwork.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff share a clear commitment to doing their best for all children. They provide strong support for children's development through their day-to-day care, supervision and well-informed guidance on matters such as health, safety and relationships. They use rewards well to maintain good behaviour, and these have also been helpful in bringing about a substantial increase in pupils' attendance. The school manages potential risks well and suitable attention is paid to checks on adults to safeguard pupils' welfare. Arrangements, responsibilities and training for child protection are suitable and kept up-to-date. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, offering constructive guidance or practical targets on the next steps for learning. Senior staff gather detailed information about children's attainment and use it well to track their progress closely, with a view to ensuring that it is good. The attentiveness of staff and children's good behaviour create a climate in which learners thrive.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a strong steer for positive whole school improvement. She has successfully maintained a determined focus on strategically and systematically raising standards and achievement. She has established effective systems for checking how well children are doing, identifying priorities for further improvement and implementing these. Because information is widely shared, the school is developing a shared understanding of its strengths, what it needs to do next and a team approach to school improvement. Nevertheless, many teachers are new to taking responsibility for leading a subject. While well informed, they are currently dependent on the headteacher for driving initiatives to improve provision further. Governance is good. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and ongoing priorities. They take their role seriously and increasingly hold the school to account.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

21 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Powers Hall Infant School Witham CM8 1NA

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school recently. A special thank you goes to the children who met us, either in the computer suite or class 8 and were so willing to share their ideas and their work with us. We agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school. Here are some of the good things we found.

- You enjoy school and feel safe when you are there.
- You concentrate well in lessons and this helps you make good progress with your reading, writing, mathematics and computer skills.
- You behave well in lessons and around school and are friendly to each other.
- You are very sensible when you take responsibility as a school councillor or playleader or help with other projects.
- Teachers plan a good variety of practical activities for you that help you learn.
- Mrs. Edwards is good at helping the teachers to help you.
- You know that all the adults in school care about you, so you trust them and feel confident about asking for help.

We have asked Mrs Edwards and the teachers to do a few things to make your school even better.

- Find even more exciting ways of helping you to write even clearer letter shapes.
- Find even harder work for those of you who find learning quite easy.
- Help Mrs Edwards by coming up with more ideas about making the school and your learning even better.

We hope you carry on enjoying learning as much as you do now.

Jill Bavin Lead inspector