

Hartford Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110711
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325203
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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)	179
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	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dominic O'Sullivan
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Burdon
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mayfield Crescent Hartford Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 1UL
Telephone number	01480 398046
Fax number	01480 398047

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 smaller-than-average sized school serving Hartford in Huntingdon and sharing its large open site with Hartford Junior School. Children come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The majority are of White British heritage, though there are a small, but growing number from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of these are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of children eligible to claim free school meals is below average. A higher proportion than is usually found have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this includes the percentage with a statement of special educational needs. When they enter the two Reception classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), they have levels of knowledge and skills that are below those normally expected, particularly their language and literacy skills. The school has achieved a Basic Skills Quality Mark and has Healthy Schools Status.

Extended provision is offered on the school site that includes a playgroup that operates from the school community room, and a breakfast, after school and holiday club that also operate from various rooms on the school premises. Private or voluntary bodies other than the governing body of the school manage these settings.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstandingly effective school where children make exceptional progress. They start school with levels of knowledge and skills below, and sometimes well below, those normally found. By the time they leave the school, children have not only caught up with their peers, but outperformed the majority to attain above- average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. There are outstanding arrangements to ensure that children in the EYFS are appropriately supported and thus make extremely good progress.

The school's success arises from the remarkably clear vision and purpose shared by the headteacher, governors and the caring and committed staff team. This results from the outstanding leadership and strong direction given by the headteacher, along with the able senior management team. Leaders know the school extremely well because close attention is paid to checking every detail of the effectiveness of its work in order to make sure that everyone is doing as well as they can. The extremely positive ethos is evident on entering the school where the environment is bright and stimulating and it is clear that practitioners know exactly what children need to help them to succeed. Children are nurtured yet, at the same time, challenged to do their best so that they become well-rounded individuals. As a result, pupils not only achieve well academically, but their personal development is exceptional. It is not surprising that parents are highly appreciative of the school. One wrote: 'Hartford Infant School is a fantastic school. The teachers and teaching assistants are well led by Mrs Burdon and the leadership team. My child loves coming to school and has learnt so much. I cannot praise this school enough for all their hard work.' This comment represents the views of many who responded to the questionnaire. Pupils echo this sentiment in their demonstration of exceptional levels of enjoyment and good attendance.

Children's behaviour is exemplary; they take pride in helping others and in contributing to the smooth running of the school. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and how to keep themselves and each other safe. The combination of good literacy and numeracy skills and exceptional personal skills equips pupils extremely well for the next stage of education and life. Providing outstanding pastoral care and academic guidance is central to the school's ethos and includes robust systems for ensuring high levels of health, safety and welfare, as well as ensuring that children are absolutely clear about what is expected of them and what they need to do to improve.

Teaching is outstanding in how it ensures that the features of best practice are consistently applied across school. Those who find learning more difficult or who are in the early stages of learning English get excellent support, both individually and in groups, from able teaching assistants so these pupils also achieve extremely well. Planning for the outstanding curriculum is exceptionally meticulous in how it ensures the needs and interests of everyone are exceedingly well met. The potential of the outdoor learning environment to further enrich the curriculum has yet to be fully realised. Excellent leadership and management have ensured that the school has continued to go from strength to strength since the last inspection and that this evidences an outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

From low and sometimes very low starting points, children make remarkable progress in the EYFS to catch up and achieve the levels of knowledge and skills expected in most areas and to achieve good personal development by the time they enter Year 1. This is due to outstanding leadership and management from a skilled, leading practitioner and her able team who share an exceptional knowledge of the EYFS curriculum and of how children develop and learn. Welfare needs are exceptionally well met. Adults are extremely welcoming and caring, and settle children quickly so they are confident and ready to learn. They get to know children through accurate assessments and plan closely to meet individual needs. The curriculum is exciting and engaging, but always focused on relevant learning objectives. The planning for activities following continuous themes is really well done, giving children opportunities, through an amazing array of activities, to re-visit and experiment with their learning in different ways. Teaching is never less than good and is often outstanding. Good behaviour is modelled and actively taught. Children are taught how to listen, ask important questions, take turns and how to take responsibility and look after themselves and each other. Adults are skilled in knowing when to step in and ask questions that challenge children further and when to step back and let children explore for themselves. The leader knows the setting well and is not complacent. Plans are in place to promote learning in all areas even more effectively outdoors so that provision found here matches the high quality of that inside the setting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop and fully exploit the outdoor learning environment to ensure that the richness and impact of the curriculum offered to children outdoors matches the high quality of that offered indoors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

From low starting points, children make outstanding progress to reach standards that are consistently above the national average in the assessment tests at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. A consistently higher proportion than is normally found attain the highest grades in these tests. The close attention paid to checking on how well children are doing and the prompt action taken in response to these checks have ensured that wherever gaps in children's learning are identified, for example, in the levels of children's speaking and listening skills, these have been tackled swiftly and successfully and turned into strengths. It is in this way that the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is also being rapidly closed and that challenging targets are consistently set and met. Evidence in school confirms that children in all year groups are currently making rapid progress and are on course to attain high standards once again. Children who require additional help with their learning, whatever their need, are supported highly effectively so that they too make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. This is because the code of values and beliefs which underpin the ethos of the school are absolutely clear, consistently modelled and indeed lived by every member of the school. Children demonstrate

a strong sense of right and wrong. They are extremely caring and considerate of others, are respectful of their feelings and beliefs and are keen to celebrate everyone's success. It is not surprising, therefore, that their behaviour is outstanding as a result of clear expectations and consistently applied systems for rewards and sanctions. Everyone helps to ensure that the Golden Rules are kept and that Golden Time is enjoyed. Children demonstrate a remarkable understanding of how to live safely and healthily. They tuck in to healthy school lunches and enjoy being physically active. They talk maturely about avoiding everyday dangers. Many were keen to volunteer that their favourite thing about school is work because it is so interesting and enjoyable. Pupils make a strong contribution to helping the school run smoothly, for example, through the school council and the many responsibilities they proudly take on. Their contribution extends beyond school to charity fund raising, partnership work with other schools and to welcoming community members into school to share celebrations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Exceptionally respectful relationships and highly effective behaviour management underpin outstanding teaching and learning. Teachers ensure that children's behaviour is exemplary and that they are extremely well motivated to work hard and achieve their best. Lessons flow and no time is lost to learning. Planning for engaging activities is meticulous and is based on accurate assessments. They make sure that all are challenged to do well, whatever their ability. The many practical hands-on activities keep everyone engaged and having fun. Excellent resources, including information and communication technology, support learning further. Able teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the progress of the individuals and groups that they support. Children are encouraged to collaborate highly successfully to maximise progress for all. Most significantly, the tremendous attention to detail in the way that identified strengths are applied and rigorously checked up on, right across school, ensures that teaching and learning are of a consistently high quality, regardless of whatever staffing or other changes may occur.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Starting from a remarkable understanding of how children learn effectively, the curriculum is meticulously planned to make sure the specific needs of all the children who attend Hartford Infants are met extremely well and that everyone is included in all that the school has to offer. The key to success is how everything is put in place to ensure that children are, first and foremost, ready to learn and then presenting the curriculum to them in a way that makes it as easy as possible for them to learn effectively. As a result, pupils develop high levels of basic skills that they can apply equally effectively across other curricular areas and in real-life situations. There is a truly themed approach which links subjects together in meaningful ways and brings learning alive, with lots of active, practical activities and investigations to challenge and develop thinking and problem-solving skills. The school is currently reviewing how it increases pupil's understanding of national and global communities to build on its strong work locally. Extra-curricular opportunities are many, varied and relevant to children's needs and interests. There are clubs to develop academic, physical, social and emotional skills. An array of enrichment activities includes many visits out and visitors to school about which children are enthusiastic to share their memories. The development and use of the school's own outdoor

environment to add further to the richness and effectiveness of the curriculum for all ages is in its early stages.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Procedures are rigorous in ensuring children's health, safety and welfare. Systems for ensuring children are safeguarded meet requirements. The highest priority is given to overcoming any barriers to learning, be they physical, social, emotional, academic or cultural. Children who may be vulnerable are identified quickly and their needs are extremely well met. Outstanding provision is made for all those who need additional support in order to be fully included in all that the school has to offer. As a result, these children make exceptional progress while they are at the school. Parents and outside agencies play a full role in partnership with the school. Detailed information is collected about all aspects of children's progress and this information is interrogated highly effectively to inform planning for the next targets for improvement, either for individual children or for the school as a whole. Through high quality individual feedback, personal targets, marking and various whole-school reward systems, children know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. As one member of staff succinctly volunteered, 'The school promotes an 'I can' attitude in all that is done to give confidence and enthusiasm for children to work hard and achieve well. We all work together as a team to help to achieve this.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels because the headteacher has been remarkably effective at bringing together an able team of practitioners and governors, all committed to her vision of achieving the very best for every child at Hartford. She has nurtured and developed leaders and other staff so successfully that they work seamlessly together to check that provision is of the highest quality and to put swiftly in place any necessary improvements. The finer details about how everything should be done are agreed and consistently applied. This close attention to detail, modelled by the headteacher and other senior leaders, underpins a great deal of the school's success, ensuring that nothing is missed and that there is rigour in all things. Governance is of high quality because governors have an excellent understanding of the school's work and play a full part in its strategic management as well as providing practical, hands-on support. Parents say they value the way they are included in a meaningful partnership. Leaders demonstrate an outstanding commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities. A working party has met to consider strengthening the promotion of community cohesion and how the successful work carried out within the schools' immediate community can be built upon. The resulting action plan has yet to be fully implemented and its impact measured.

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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

4 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Hartford Infant School, Hartford, PE29 1UL

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. This letter is to tell you what we found out.

There are many outstanding things about your school. Some of them are that:

- you achieve high standards and make excellent progress
- you behave extremely well and work hard to help others
- your knowledge of how to keep yourself healthy and safe is outstanding
- you enjoy school a great deal and the school is excellent at organising interesting things for you to do
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are extremely well cared for and looked after
- your headteacher and the other people who help run your school are highly effective at making sure that you get an outstanding education.

We agree with your parents that you go to an outstanding school. However, all of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them with this the most important thing for them to do next is:

- improve the outside areas of the school so that learning can be as exciting outdoors as it is inside.

We are sure that the headteacher and all the other staff will continue to do everything they can to help you. You can play your part by continuing to behave so well, working really hard and coming to school every day.

We would like to wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector