

# Highfields Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114769
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326064
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Wynford-Jones

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	251
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	40
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Malcolm Gentry
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Hilary Cook
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 October 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Colchester Road Lawford Manningtree Essex CO11 2BN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 392223
<b>Fax number</b>	01206 397322

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the impact of leadership and management on improving pupils' achievement and raising standards, the quality of academic guidance and the impact of provision on pupils' personal development. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, sampling of pupils' work, discussions with pupils, members of staff and the chair of governors and a scrutiny of some school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is a similar size to most of its type and serves a residential area. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS). When children start in the Reception class, their skills and knowledge are similar to those expected of children of this age. Nearly all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly similar to that in most schools, with the majority having moderate learning difficulties. Fewer than average numbers of pupils join or leave during the school year than in most schools. The school holds the following awards: Healthy School, Sports Partnership, Active Mark, Basic Skills, Eco Schools and is an Investor in People.

Total replacement of the old school building was undertaken in 2002 under a public private partnership agreement. The school shares the site with Manningtree High School.

A private pre-school uses a class base within the school. It was inspected separately at the same time as this inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that this is a good school. The school rightly has a good reputation in the neighbourhood and enjoys the support of the vast majority of parents. One wrote, 'The atmosphere in the school is warm and welcoming. The children are happy and enjoy learning.' Many others echoed this sentiment.

Central to the success of the school is the quality of leadership and management. It is good at all levels. The headteacher provides effective leadership and is supported well by the senior management team. Since the last inspection, they have adopted a more rigorous approach to the analysis of the work of the school and have successfully brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and in the rate of pupils' progress. Both are now good. This has led to an improvement in standards at the end of Years 2 and 6. In Year 6, overall standards have risen from similar to the national averages in 2005 to above average in 2007 and indications are that 2008 results are also above average. Provisional test results suggest that standards in English in 2008 were exceptionally high. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to achieve similar standards. The rate of pupils' improvement in reading and writing is noticeably quicker than in mathematics. This is because the school has focussed specifically on developing these skills through the Essex Writing Project and the Reading Recovery Programme and then consolidating the pupils' knowledge through work in other subjects. Pupils' progress in mathematics is slowed by their less well developed skills in investigative work. Nevertheless, all pupils, including those who find learning difficult, are achieving well overall.

The improvements in teaching have been achieved through rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and the introduction of a more detailed assessment and pupil progress tracking system. The assessment information is used increasingly well to plan lessons. The plans are detailed and clearly identify the learning intentions for each lesson. The respective roles of the teachers and teaching assistants are clear as they work together effectively to promote learning. Teachers generally use questioning strategies well to probe pupils' thinking and to extend their learning. Resources, including the electronic whiteboards, are used effectively and bring interest to the lessons. The quality of academic guidance has also improved since the last inspection. Overall, it is good. The vast majority of pupils know their targets in English, mathematics and science and receive sound guidance as to how to achieve them. There are many good examples of developmental marking in pupils' English books but it is not as sharp in other subjects. Pupils are beginning to contribute to identifying the measures by which their work can be evaluated and are satisfactorily developing the skills of assessing their own work and that of their peers. The school has rightly identified this as an area for further development.

Pupils enjoy coming to school because 'the teachers are great and they make learning fun'. The staff place a great emphasis on the pastoral care and the development of relationships, which are very good. They successfully create an attractive and informative environment that encourages good learning. The displays reflect a good curriculum that promotes pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils speak highly of the good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the school. The extra-curricular activities and the annual extended visit to Norfolk contribute much to their enjoyment of learning and their positive attitudes to school. One pupil, when asked how they would like to see the school changed, said, 'Let us stay on here till Year 10.' It is no surprise that their attendance is above average and it has improved since the last inspection.

In classrooms and around the school the pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They want to take part in lessons. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of being healthy. They enjoy growing and eating fresh vegetables. They make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Members of the school council are keen to talk about their plans for future activities and fund raising events to support local and international charities. Although French, music and art play a significant part in the life of the school and contribute a good deal to pupils' cultural development, pupils' understanding of different cultures and ways of life is less well developed than other aspects of their knowledge. The school is planning a multicultural themed week during the spring term to address this area. Pupils have a good understanding of being safe and fully appreciate the potential dangers presented by strangers. Pupils' good personal skills and the standards they achieve prepare them well for the next stage in their education. Overall, their personal development is good.

The school's capacity for improvement is good because leaders and managers know the school well, they have brought about a range of improvements and are committed to ensuring standards continue to improve. There is shared understanding of the school's effectiveness and the areas for development. These are set out extensively in the comprehensive school development plan. Links with outside agencies, including the Church, other schools, preschools, local organisations and parents are good. Pupils regularly take part in local sporting and musical events. These links contribute effectively to pupils' understanding of their community and their place in it. Governors provide a good balance between the level of support and challenge they provide. Many have considerable experience and bring a breadth of understanding to the governing body. They monitor the work of the school well and set challenging targets for improvement. Health and safety procedures are rigorous. The school complies with the latest government requirements on safeguarding pupils. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Induction arrangements are good. Consequently, the children settle quickly, are happy and feel secure. The curriculum is well planned to ensure all areas of learning are taught and there is a consistency of approach between the two classes. Staff place a high priority on promoting the children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result, the relationships between adults and the children are good. The children enjoy their lessons and are developing their skills in working and playing together well. Their behaviour is excellent.

The children make particularly good progress in their personal development and in their communication, language and literacy skills because the school has given priority to these aspects. As a result, the proportions of children meeting or exceeding the nationally expected standards in these areas of learning are significantly above average. Children's attainment and progress are assessed and tracked carefully. The information is used well to support the vast majority of the children, especially those who find learning difficult. However, the assessments are not always used as effectively to raise the attainment of the more able children, particularly in their mathematical development. As a result, their progress in this area is satisfactory and their attainment by the end of the Reception class is similar to that found in most schools. Nevertheless, teaching is good overall and teaching assistants provide effective support for children. Lessons are well planned and meet the needs of the vast majority. At times, there are insufficient opportunities for the children to make unaided choices. This is restricting the development of their skills to become independent learners.

The recently appointed EYFS leader has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. She has already implemented changes and has a clear plan for the future development of this Key Stage. The outside area is used well and provides a valuable resource to enhance the children's learning. Additional funds have been allocated for further development.

**What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards and pupils' achievements in mathematics across the school.
- Consolidate the recently introduced strategies to ensure all pupils understand and contribute to identifying their next steps for improvement.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<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	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**

14 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfields Primary School, Lawford, CO11 2BN.

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. We were very pleased to hear that you like coming to school and to see your attendance is above average. Throughout the day, your behaviour was excellent and you demonstrated that you are keen to take responsibility. You have an outstanding understanding of healthy living and know a lot about being safe. We were impressed by your good contribution to the school community and by your raising of funds for different charities. Good luck with your shoebox collection. We are sure it will go well.

Your school provides you with a good education. You make good progress as you move through the school. By the end of Year 6, your achievement is good. The standards you reach in English, mathematics and science are usually above those reached in most schools. You have recently made a lot of improvement in your reading and writing but the rate of progress in mathematics is not as quick. To help you to reach higher standards we have asked your headteacher and teachers to concentrate on raising standards in mathematics. We have also asked them to ensure you understand what you have to do next to improve all your work and that the recently introduced ways of involving you in assessing your own and your classmates' work are developed further.

We know you will play your part and want to do well. Good luck for the future.

With best wishes

David Wynford Jones

Lead inspector