

Hamstel Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114771
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	326065
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Pangbourne

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	451
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 G Etherington
Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Clark
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hamstel Road Southend-on-Sea Essex SS2 4PQ
Telephone number	01702 468461
Fax number	01702 602064

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: boys' attainment in writing, provision for more able writers and mathematicians, the quality of teaching and how well the school promotes cohesion within the community. The evidence base stems from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation, records of pupils' achievement and progress, as well as discussions with senior leaders and with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found 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

This is a large Infant and Nursery School. It is part of the Southend Education Trust (SET). Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is increasing. Almost 10 per cent speak English as an additional language. There are pockets of considerable social deprivation and the proportion known to be eligible for a free school meal is well above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and most of these pupils have moderate learning or speech and language difficulties. When children enter the Nursery, their attainment is far below what is expected for their age, although this is not the case for all children. The school provides a breakfast club and has recently gained the national Healthy Schools award.

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 is emerging from a period of considerable change. Since the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher two years ago, there have been many new initiatives. For example, a new senior management team is in place. Teachers have new responsibilities, giving them more responsibility for the progress made by their pupils. Assessment procedures are more rigorous and the way that the curriculum is organised, based on areas of learning rather than subjects, has been improved. All these things are already having a beneficial impact on pupils' learning and achievement but are not yet embedded consistently through the school to help this good school in its desire to be outstanding.

Parents cannot praise the school highly enough. They appreciate the way that it reaches out to help families, particularly those with difficulties. Typical of many, a parent wrote, 'There is a happy, caring, community feel to the school.' The pupils agree saying 'Without the teachers we couldn't learn the things we need.'

Fundamental to the success of the school is the palpable sense of team spirit that permeates it. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has built a committed team of staff and governors who share her drive for improvement. Staff work in teams to take responsibility for areas of learning, thoroughly monitoring standards and teaching in their areas and sharing their findings with the governors. The headteacher is skilled in accessing extra funds for the benefit of the pupils. For example, there have been many improvements to the premises, both inside and outside, resulting in an attractive environment that encourages learning.

The school monitors everything closely to ensure that it is of good quality. Senior staff identified that teacher assessments were not giving an accurate picture of the pupils' attainment and this has now been successfully addressed, with last year's assessments being agreed by the local authority. In 2008, standards were below average at the end of Year 2, particularly in writing for boys and in mathematics for all pupils. Few more able pupils exceeded the level expected for their age in either subject. The school has been working hard to address this, but recognises that there is still more to do. Nevertheless, all pupils, including those who find it harder to develop literacy and numeracy skills and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well from what, for many, are very low starting points.

There are several reasons why pupils do well. The good quality of teaching challenges the pupils and teaching assistants provide effective support, particularly for pupils who find it hard to learn. Staff watch each pupil's progress closely and provide extra help for any who are falling behind or forging ahead. Pupils have their own 'learning ladders' and these are beginning to help them understand what they need to do to improve. There is a strong emphasis on the basic skills and expectations are high. In return, pupils behave well and try hard to succeed. They thoroughly enjoy the rich range of activities, including French lessons, visits to places of interest and visits from the local community to share their skills, such as bell ringing and pottery. The contribution they make to the community is outstanding. Pupils swim each week in the school's own swimming pool and this, together with massage sessions, vegetable growing and an excellent understanding of how to stay fit, healthy and safe boosts their personal development. The strong emphasis on respect and care for others promotes their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pupils love acting as 'Smarties' to help younger ones and talk enthusiastically about the School Council and the wide range of charities that

they support. They develop respect for and understanding of people from different backgrounds and walks of life.

This is a school where every single pupil is important and has the opportunity to succeed. The school makes every effort to encourage pupils to attend school, and does much to support families who find it hard to get their children to school. A few families keep their children away unnecessarily and this means that attendance is below average. Pastoral care is of high quality and pupils grow in confidence as they move through the school.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the progress made since the previous inspection shows that the school has a good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many parents praised the start that their children receive. One wrote, 'It is a pleasure to send my child to Nursery.' Many comments praised the ways in which their children were helped to settle into Nursery and then how easily they later transferred to the reception classes. In their first days in Nursery, the children were happily joining in all the exciting activities on offer. Children make good progress through the Nursery and the Reception classes but few are on course to meet the early learning goals, set for them nationally, because they have so much ground to make up from their very low starting points. Children achieve well because the teaching is of good quality and adults make learning fun. For example, Nursery children delighted in positioning a bucket under a tap and turning it on before watering the garden. All the time, the adult talked to them about what they were doing, extending their vocabulary and understanding. Similarly, in a Reception class, the children were extending their mathematical skills while making dough animals, discussing the number of legs with their teacher. Children behave well because adults make their expectations clear. Effective leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) ensures that the curriculum is well planned, that activities meet the children's needs and that all the necessary welfare requirements are met. The new EYFS curriculum is in place and all key workers are undergoing training to ensure even more consistency of practice throughout the EYFS.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help all pupils to do better, particularly boys in writing and the more able writers and mathematicians.
- Embed the new initiatives, such as increased staff responsibilities, rigorous assessment, and improved curriculum organisation consistently throughout the school.

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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	3
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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	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	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

18 September 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Hamstel Infant and Nursery School, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 4PQ.

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I would like to tell you what I found out.

You told me that you like coming to school and that you have lots of interesting things to do. I agree with you. I enjoyed watching some of you doing your massages and I thought that you sang very well in your singing assembly. I was amazed by the vegetables that you have grown! All the grownups look after you very well and you make good progress as you move through the school because the teachers give you work that is just right for you. I thought that you played nicely with your friends and behaved well. You enjoy all the opportunities you have, such as being 'Smarties' and sharing your ideas in School Council. Your swimming lessons help you keep fit and healthy. You are very lucky to have your own pool! Mrs Clark and the governors work hard to make sure that your school is a lovely place to be. Your families know that you go to a good school.

Since Mrs Clark came to your school, she has made a lot of changes to make your school even better. Teachers now have new things to be responsible for, they look more closely at how well you are getting on and you are learning different things. I have asked Mrs Clark and the teachers to keep working on all these things to make sure that you all get the best possible education. I have also asked them to help you all do better in writing and mathematics, especially those of you who find it easy to learn. I have also asked them to help boys who find writing difficult. You can all help by continuing to do your best.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at Hamstel Infant School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead inspector