

High Ongar Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114938
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326095
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	144
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	Mrs Judith Ogan
Headteacher	Miss Penny Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Street High Ongar Essex CM5 9NB
Telephone number	01277 363761
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

This popular, small primary school, housed in a grade 2 listed Victorian building, serves the local village but also attracts pupils from well outside the immediate locality. Almost all are from White British families. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is below the average for similar schools, as is the number entitled to free school meals. There are average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These needs vary, but are mainly moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has received a Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and a Financial Management Standards in 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

This is a good school, which develops in its pupils very positive attitudes to education. Pupils' personal development is outstanding and they show a real interest in their lessons and an enthusiasm for learning. Their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is excellent. They are responsible, hardworking and very well behaved. As a result, they learn quickly and are eager to succeed.

By the time they reach the end of Year 2, pupils are currently slightly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment has risen steadily over the last three years and pupils are making good progress. Achievement through Key Stage 2 is good overall, but is difficult to measure precisely because of the high numbers of pupils who join the school part way through this phase of their education. Some newcomers have a history of interrupted schooling. Only just over half of the Year 6 cohort in 2008 joined the school in their Reception year and a significant proportion of this small cohort joined the school during Year 6. One reason for this is the school's deserved reputation as a small, friendly community, where children who find learning difficult or who have found it hard to settle in larger schools, can flourish. Overall, the national test results for Key Stage 2 in 2008 were close to average. The provisional test results for 2009 show an improvement. Standards in English have risen and are currently well above average because new teaching approaches have proved very effective. These have not yet been extended fully to mathematics and science, where standards are average. This represents good progress from the levels these same pupils reached when they were seven. Those who have been at the school from the start of their education have achieved very well and many reached Level 5 in the tests, which is above the standard expected for their age. Occasionally opportunities are missed in the Reception class to develop children's speaking, listening and thinking skills.

Care, guidance and support are good, as parents recognise. A typical comment was, 'My children love being at High Ongar and feel proud to be part of the school. It gives them a wonderful education!' Pupils' preparation for their future lives is good. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of keeping safe and healthy. Neither the school nor the pupils tolerate any form of bullying or racial disharmony. The school works successfully to prepare pupils for their future in a diverse society and to promote understanding and cohesion within the local community. A key factor in the school's success is good teaching. All teachers manage their classes well and have excellent relationships with their pupils, which helps to explain why the pupils behave so well in classes. Good support from teachers and their assistants helps pupils who find learning more difficult to make good progress. The curriculum is good, especially in the provision for literacy and it is enriched by many visits and clubs.

Leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team analyses data well to discover where pupils underperform and deal with the issues raised effectively to improve pupils' progress. The school has improved since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

On entry to the Reception Class, children's stages of development are in line with those found nationally. They develop positive attitudes to school and are happy and friendly towards each

other. They behave well and form trusting relationships with the adults, who take good care of them.

Children demonstrate a fair understanding of what they are learning and are able to select their own activities as well as participating in adult-led learning. They work well alongside the Year 1 pupils who share their class. These older pupils help them to settle, by setting an example of appropriate behaviour and attitudes to school. Their personal development is particularly good by the time they reach Year 1 and almost all reach the expected levels for their age in the other areas of learning. Learning opportunities focus suitably on meeting the needs of all children, including those who find learning difficult. The wide range of resources and the good balance of indoor and outdoor activities keep children interested and stimulated. Regular assessments enable the teacher appropriately to measure children's progress and adjust the balance of activities to meet individual needs. All the adults care for children well, but not all use talk well to stimulate and challenge children, so that communication and thinking skills are not always being developed sufficiently. Some learning opportunities are missed as a result. Leadership and management are satisfactory and children benefit from clear guidance and support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in science and mathematics by extending the use of the teaching and assessment strategies that have proved successful in English.
- Improve the quality of communication between children and adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage to promote better speaking, listening and thinking skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well. They make good progress through Key Stage 1 and standards are rising. In 2008, national assessments of pupils in Year 2 showed that they were in line with the national average. Assessments in 2009 show that they are now slightly above average overall, and well above average in writing. This is the result of much greater emphasis on explaining to pupils how they can improve their work.

National tests in 2008 showed that at the end of Year 6 the proportion of pupils who reached the expected levels in English, science and mathematics were average. The attainment on entry of this year group was below expectations. Almost half these pupils were relative newcomers to the school, some having joined in their final year. The school integrates them successfully into their new classes, but interruptions caused by changing schools have a negative effect on their attainment. Those pupils who had the benefit of unbroken education at the same school, made better progress and achieved well. The emphasis on the development of writing skills, so successful in Key Stage 1, has also been adopted in Key Stage 2. As a result, writing standards have improved considerably. The provisional results for English for 2009 are well above the national average. This represents excellent progress from their Key Stage 1 levels. Achievement is not quite as good in mathematics and science, where provisional results are around the national average. The school is planning to extend the teaching and assessment strategies that have worked so successfully in English to these other subjects in the coming year. Overall, achievement is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around school. They enjoy school greatly. A special feature is their kindness and consideration for each other. Pupils are very aware of the needs of others and help those who find learning difficult. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They take on extra responsibilities willingly, as play leaders, for example. There are excellent relationships between teachers and children. Attendance is above average, partly because pupils enjoy school so much and miss it when they are not present. The school council is very effective. It gives pupils a real say in the running of the school and gives them opportunities to develop skills that will be very useful later in life. They raise money for charity, make spending decisions and organise fund raising events.

Multi-cultural development is good. Pupils visit places of worship and welcome visitors from a range of ethnic groups into their school. They learn about French culture along with the study of the language. They fully understand the importance of physical exercise and healthy eating. Pupils are particularly proud of their sports teams that have regular success against those from larger schools. They are very involved in community activities, especially through music and sport, and have planted trees and flowers in their own village and beyond, to enhance the environment for all in the locality.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers ensure that pupils learn how to work independently, listen carefully and follow instructions. They plan work to match pupils' varying needs and use a very good range of strategies to help maintain pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning. They make lessons fun by introducing hands-on activities, such as exploring the senses through comparing jelly, custard and sand. Teachers ensure that teaching points are presented clearly and with impact by using modern technology well. Most teachers make learning objectives clear and share success criteria effectively. In English, this is done particularly well so that pupils are very aware of how to improve their work. In satisfactory lessons, the pace is slower than in the more successful lessons. Assessment information and targets are not always used well to promote learning which means that a few pupils are not clear about what they must do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to develop their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). There are good links between English and mathematics and the other subject areas, especially science and history. This helps to reinforce pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The emphasis on music, art and design gives pupils valued creative opportunities. They benefit from the good physical education curriculum, which teaches them the skills they need to do well in a wide range of sports. The school has a good programme of enrichment, visits and visitors to make learning interesting and relevant.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good pastoral care and support. Pupils' particular needs are identified promptly. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils, including child protection, health and risk assessment procedures, are very secure and reviewed regularly. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that all pupils, including the vulnerable and those at risk, are safe and supported. Procedures to promote good attendance are firmly in place. There are good assessment procedures to track pupils' progress over time. The best assessment systems, including self-assessment, are in English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The senior leadership team is accurate in its evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has made decisions that have produced measurable improvements. For example, in 2008, no pupils reached Level 5 in writing. A programme of professional development and new teaching approaches has transformed the quality of written work. Provisional results for 2009, received just before the inspection, show that this year 48% of pupils attained Level 5.

The school has effective systems for monitoring and developing teaching. The school set challenging annual targets for pupils' performance in the national tests and assessments in 2009 and these were exceeded. Coordinators' monitoring and leadership of their subjects are good, as is governance. There is a genuine commitment to equal opportunities and community cohesion. The school has a central place within the local community, contributing very well to local events. It ensures that pupils learn about the wider world community. The school gives good value for money.

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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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	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	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

8 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of High Ongar Primary School, Essex, CM5 9NB

Thank you for being so very welcoming to me when I came to your school. You were all very friendly and polite. Your singing in assembly was beautiful. A special thank you to the children who met me at lunchtime to tell me about your school. I am writing to let you know what I found.

You told me that you like your school very much and I liked it too. It is giving you a good education. All the staff care for you very well. Your personal development is outstanding. It was wonderful to see how well the older children care for their younger friends. You know what to do to keep healthy and safe and I was impressed by your sporting achievements, especially in the cross country races. Your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting for you and in turn you behave very well indeed and try very hard to do your best work.

I have asked the school to work even harder to make sure that you succeed as well in mathematics and science as you do in English. I have also asked the staff who work with the youngest children to do more to develop their language skills.

I wish you all the best for your future lives. Make the most of your time in this lovely, happy school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector