

Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117377
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326590
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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)	219
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 Hilary Robins
Headteacher	Ms Hellen Phillimore
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Shenley Road Hemel Hempstead HP2 7JZ
Telephone number	01442 211963

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2009
Inspection number	326590

Fax number

01442253765

Age group 3-7

Inspection dates 25-26 March 2009

Inspection number 326590

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant and nursery school serving its immediate locality. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there are two part-time Nursery classes and two full time Reception classes. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is below the levels expected for the age group. The large majority of pupils are White British with just over a quarter of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of children are at the early stages of learning English in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is a little lower than average as is the proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning.

In partnership with the on-site junior school and nearby pre-school provider, the school has organised a breakfast and after-school club which is run at the junior school. In collaboration with the nearby Woodhall Farm Pre-School a lunch club is provided which operates at the Children's Centre.

The school holds 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

This is a good school. It has significant strengths in the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides for pupils which lead to their excellent personal development. Good leadership and management by the headteacher, senior team and governors ensure a school where standards are consistently above average and pupils make good progress. There is good capacity for further improvement. The school is a welcoming community and has very effective links with the on-site junior school and nearby pre-schools. Parents hold the school in high regard. As one parent wrote 'the school very much values each child as an individual and there is a strong sense of community and care for each other'. Parents particularly appreciate the 'link up time' opportunities to come into classes to speak to staff at the beginning and end of each day. The strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to think for themselves and take responsibility for their actions is evident in lessons and the playground. The impact is seen in the very good progress pupils make in learning to manage their own behaviour. By the time they leave Year 2, their behaviour is excellent. Pupils have a good sense of fun and are kind, considerate and courteous. These qualities, together with their above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare them well for the next stage of their education. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are very keen to get into class to take up the interesting start of the day activities. Teaching and learning are good. Strengths in the teaching are the strong teamwork between staff to ensure pupils of all abilities have appropriate work and support to enable them to make good progress. The impact of detailed planning and support is seen in the good progress pupils make from their start in Year 1. Occasionally, learning is satisfactory because pupils are kept sitting on the carpet for too long and do not have enough time to complete the work planned for them. The curriculum is organised well to make relevant links between subjects so that learning is meaningful and pupils have opportunities to practise skills such as writing in many subjects. The good links with sports partnerships and other organisations provide a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a secure and challenging environment so that children settle quickly and happily into school. Staff work very efficiently as a team to ensure children are looked after well and feel safe. Children's skills are below those expected for their age when they enter the Nursery, especially in speaking and listening and some aspects of their personal development. Teaching and learning are good in the Nursery and Reception classes. In both classes, there is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children. Children thoroughly enjoy learning because they are provided with good opportunities to organise and discover things for themselves; for example, building models from junk or searching for bugs in the wooded area. The well-resourced outdoor learning environment is used to good advantage for adventurous play. Adults make careful observations of what children know and can do and plan work matched closely to their interests and learning needs. A strength in both classes is the close and productive links with parents. The information provided for them so that they can help their child at home is good, but not enough is provided about how letter sounds and letter formation are taught.

Achievement is good overall. Children develop very positive and confident attitudes to learning. The small number of children learning to speak English as an additional language and who

know little English when they start in the Nursery make good progress. Staff are aware of each child's stage of language acquisition and plan accordingly. In Reception, the good ratio of adults to children ensures that small teaching groups are effective, especially in developing early mathematical skills. The school identified that more needed to be done to improve the rate at which children learn and use letter sounds. There has been some improvement but teaching is not yet systematic enough to raise the rate of progress to a good rate. By the end of Reception, most children reach standards appropriate for their age in all areas of learning except in their attitudes to learning and mathematical development where standards are above, and in communication, language and literacy where they are below, especially in writing.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader manages staff well. Teamwork is a significant strength which is clearly evident in the excellent working relationships between adults and children. There is good, on-going development of the links between pre-school providers, where school staff act as mentors, and the Nursery. This means that providers have a good understanding of what goes on in the Nursery and can prepare children for this. Consequently, the move from pre-school to Nursery is very well managed. Transition between Nursery and Reception classes is also managed very effectively so that children quickly settle to learn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching further by ensuring a more consistent pace to lessons.
- Ensure children in Reception learn and use letter sounds at a better rate by teaching these more rigorously and systematically.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards by Year 2 are consistently above average in national tests. From broadly average starting points at the beginning of Year 1, pupils of all abilities make good progress. In 2008, pupils made good progress in reading and writing from the end of Reception to the end of Year 2. Potentially higher attaining pupils do well. Over time, a better than average proportion of pupils attain the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's use of a wide range of high quality reading material promotes pupils' love of reading and they use the vocabulary they learn from stories in their own writing. Pupils speak knowledgeably of authors' styles and the books they like. Standards in ICT are above average and pupils make good use of their skills in other subjects; for example, when they use data or present their work. Pupils' art and design work displayed around the school indicates high standards in these areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

By the time that they reach Year 2, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop a secure ability to recognise right from wrong. As they progress through the school, pupils show increasing awareness and respect for one another, helping pupils of different age groups and abilities, and welcoming newcomers to the school. Pupils contribute well to their own and other communities, for example, Year 2 pupils are particularly proud of the responsible role that they play in being buddies to younger children. 'We help them to be happy and tie their shoe laces and play with them', commented a Year 2 girl. They also take responsibility for raising money for others, which recently included a collection for an Indian orphanage. Pupils love school and learning. 'Our teachers make learning fun and they help us when we get stuck'. Pupils' highly positive attitudes are reflected in their good

attendance. They have an excellent understanding of healthy eating and the importance of exercise and this is reflected in the recently obtained Healthy Schools award. They respond particularly well to the school's emphasis on developing their emotional health through the strong promotion of social skills. Consequently, pupils make good progress in developing their collaborative skills and enjoy working in groups.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A key strength in the good teaching and learning is the very effective teamwork between teachers and proficient teaching assistants. All have high aspirations for, and expectation of, pupils' progress. Pupils' abilities are known very well so that they are set challenging work which they generally undertake at a good rate, usually within small groups. Where teaching is excellent, lessons move at a brisk pace with challenging work to follow the engaging introduction. In these lessons pupils learn at a good rate. However, occasionally, when the pace drops because teachers keep their pupils sitting on the carpet for too long, pupils' learning slows to satisfactory. Good links with parents through the well-organised 'home learning' are very profitable. Parents are helped and encouraged to play an important role in the good progress their children make especially in reading. Family involvement in making models is thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well matched to the aspirations and capabilities of the pupils. Teachers ensure that their lesson plans are based on first-hand experiences as far as possible, and that they respond to the wide range of pupils' preferred ways of learning. This is a considerable aid to pupils' enjoyment of school. Most subjects are linked together effectively and the carefully chosen themes and topics also help to make learning personal to the pupils. Support for pupils' personal, social and physical development is embedded well in daily teaching routines. The curriculum is enriched by some themed and focused learning days, and weeks such as book and science weeks. However, the school is planning to extend such occasions to add further to pupils' enjoyment. There is a very wide range of good quality extra-curricular activities which supplement the curriculum well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support which the school provides for its pupils is outstanding. Pastoral care for all pupils is a major strength and is shared by all members of staff. Provision for pupils with special learning needs is good. There is well-tailored provision to support vulnerable pupils and this helps to build their self-esteem and for them to develop a 'can-do' attitude. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and commitment to the school community as they progress through the school, enjoying and achieving well. High quality homework diaries, supplemented by good homework activities, enable parents and teachers to keep in close contact and to monitor progress. The school's measures to improve attendance since the previous inspection have been effective. The school complies fully with all safeguarding and child protection procedures. There are good quality systems to track pupils' progress which are used well to inform future learning

targets. These are understood well by the pupils who are not only clear about learning targets in literacy and numeracy but also for their personal development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection when they were judged as satisfactory. Management systems are good; for example, the termly programme of assessments and scrutiny of pupils' work. This provides the headteacher and senior team with a clear understanding of the standards across the school and the progress pupils make. The information is then used to set challenging targets for subsequent terms and end of Year 2 attainment. Links with parents to support them as co-educators of their children are very successful and have a significant impact on pupils' good achievement and their understanding of cultures other than their own. Parents' and pupils' views are sought regularly and acted upon. In response to parents' views the school has organised before and after school provision and a lunch club for Nursery children. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and take a proactive role within it. They are not afraid to question to see if the school can do even better. The school's success in ensuring it is a cohesive and inclusive community is good. It has good links with organisations locally and pupils have a growing awareness of what it means to live in a global community.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------

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	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

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	2
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	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 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?	1

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**

27 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Holtsmere End Infant and Nursery School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7JZ

You may remember that inspectors visited your school recently to see how well you were doing. Thank you for being so helpful and making us feel welcome. Your behaviour is excellent and you were very polite. This letter is to let you know what we found out.

We think you go to a good school and achieve well. Standards are above average by the time you leave at the end of Year 2. You said you love coming to school and really enjoy learning and we could also see that your parents liked helping you learn at home. We enjoyed talking with you and you helped us to find out a lot about your school. You know about how to keep healthy and safe. The teaching is good, but sometimes you are kept sitting on the carpet for too long and so you do not have enough time to do your work. All the adults take very good care of you and give you lots of interesting things to do in lessons and in the excellent lunchtime clubs. You make good progress in Nursery and Reception. However, in Reception, you could make even better progress in learning letter sounds so that you can use them to help you more with your spelling and reading.

We know that your headteacher and governors want the school to be even better and so we have asked them to do two things.

- Make sure that teaching is always good or better.
- Make sure that children in Reception learn letter sounds at a faster rate.

You can help by continuing to enjoy school and working hard.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector