

Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114746
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338438
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Fahy
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Ireland
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed all six class teachers in sixteen lessons. Meetings were held with governors, groups of pupils and staff. Different aspects of the school's work were observed and documentation scrutinised, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, as well as 32 returned parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the extent to which improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision have impacted on children's learning and progress
- the effectiveness of the school's baseline assessments and tracking data in identifying and measuring pupils' progress in Key Stage 1
- the extent to which pupils learn effectively and make good progress from often very low starting points
- the degree to which the school has sustained the strengths in care, support and guidance identified in the previous inspection report.

Information about the school

Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery serves a large housing estate in Colchester.

It is an average sized infant school and although the number of pupils on roll is now more stable, it had until recently fluctuated with a considerable number of pupils joining and leaving the school during the school year. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage but there are a growing number with minority ethnic backgrounds and an increasing percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are high. The school has gained various awards and accreditations including Investors in People, Activemark, Eco School Award, Basic Skills Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools Status and Essex Schools Award for its excellence in behaviour management.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school well led by dedicated and experienced senior leaders and effectively supported by middle leaders and other staff. The great strength of the school is its very positive and caring ethos: this enables it to absorb pupils with many different personal and learning needs and help them develop as confident and capable individuals. As one parent commented, 'Our daughter has made astonishing progress in a year and a half but what matters more to us is that every child is treated as an individual and our quiet little girl feels confident and cared for.'

Children start in the Nursery class with skills and experiences that are low for their ages and make good progress during their time in the school. At the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average. Pupils have consistently demonstrated average standards in mathematics in recent years. Standards in reading and writing have been more variable but the school's information about the progress of pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 shows improvement. Over a third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and these too make good progress aided considerably by careful school tracking and effective additional learning support.

Pupils like coming to school and feel very safe. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is remarkably good and well demonstrated in assemblies where pupils are attentive and involved. Attendance has steadily improved, helped by the school's good home-school liaison. Pupils are positive about healthy eating and the majority get involved in the various sports and fitness activities on offer. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to be involved in school and community activities and a considerable number of pupils are actively involved in the school council. All of this supports pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teaching is helped by considerable teamwork in sharing successful practice and common learning schemes. This collaborative approach also exists in lessons where teachers and skilled support staff work closely and effectively to ensure pupils learn well. Good relationships characterise all lessons. Teachers know their pupils well and incrementally build pupils' confidence and skills. There is a good range of learning activities with a focus on pupils' active involvement including for example, practical work in science, group work in mathematics and research in religious education. However, each class contains pupils with widely different abilities and needs for which teachers do plan, but at times this is not enough to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently stretched. Teachers' marking is regular and detailed and pupils know their targets. Support staff help considerably in assessing pupils' progress. The curriculum is good in that it rightly includes a focus on basic skills as well as regular use of information and communication technology (ICT) and varied physical and creative experiences. This is complemented by

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numerous lunchtime and after school activities such as chess, rugby and gymnastics. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well cared for and are making good progress. Provision has been improved by the new Early Years leader working closely and effectively with her team. However, aspects of the curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes are less good because of inflexibility in the use outdoor facilities and missed opportunities to make the best use of play facilities for learning. Care, guidance and support are a major strength and central to the school's inclusive ethos. Their impact is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour, and in the effectiveness with which it supports all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and increasingly those at an early stage of English acquisition.

The school is well led by a very experienced senior leadership of headteacher and deputy who work hard and maintain high expectations of themselves and others. They are committed to developing their staff and fully involve the fast-developing middle leaders in school improvement. Consequently, staff morale is high and a sense of ownership and commitment permeates the whole school, including the support staff, caretaker and midday supervisors. Governors share a similar commitment and are actively involved in monitoring and improving the school. Most other aspects are similarly good, such as the partnership links with outside agencies, strategies to engage parents and the safeguarding of pupils. The school successfully ensures that all pupils are equally well supported and able to succeed. The school provides well for its pupils, ensures that most achieve well and therefore provides good value for money. Helping all pupils to do well is a continuing challenge for the school and it now has in place an effective blend of experienced senior leaders, talented middle leaders and committed staff that underpin its good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching by ensuring that there is a sufficiently wide range of challenging learning opportunities to fully meet the needs of all pupils.
- Improve the curriculum in Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that the use of play apparatus and activities is planned and organised as part of relevant and coherent learning programmes
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to move freely between indoor and outdoor activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' attainment has shown significant improvement over recent years especially given the low starting points of many, particularly in literacy. At the end of Year 2, pupils do relatively well in mathematics but literacy weaknesses handicap many pupils and so standards in writing have fluctuated and are on average a little below those nationally. Some of this fluctuation has resulted from pupils transferring from schools elsewhere, often with particular learning needs. The school's efforts to improve standards are proving effective with current pupils doing better in mathematics, reading and writing,

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particularly in Year 1. The considerable work undertaken in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been effective, with good use of personal targets for improvement. Pupils at an early stage of English acquisition also make good progress because of the effective support from teaching assistants and a specialist language support assistant. Pupils' enjoyment of school is high and contributes to their good behaviour and improved attendance that is now firmly in line with primary schools nationally. The strengths in healthy lifestyles are well reflected in pupils' involvement in the varied physical activities and they readily eat the well-balanced school meals. The opportunities for lunchtime workouts, rugby and football with the benefit of a specialist instructor leading physical education sessions, all help. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in and out of school through the school council and, for older pupils, acting as buddies for new or younger pupils. However, while these involve many pupils, a minority has not sufficiently developed their social skills to take on responsibility and initiate activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The best teaching shows a real understanding of how small learning steps enable pupils, particularly those with special needs, to make good progress. The better practice also provides more challenging levels of work, as seen in a mathematics lesson where some pupils were working with numbers one to ten while others were solving problems involving multiples of ten and twenty. The considerable strength in assessment practice is the very detailed evidence in pupils' books and folders which clearly shows the learning targets and when they are met. One example of particularly good practice seen was in writing where a book containing assessed writing tasks provides a visual record of a pupil's developing writing skills from year to year. In addition to the focus on basic skills across all years and the extra-curricular enrichments, the curriculum also has strengths that underpin pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies have a strong religious and moral theme and there are regular visitors representing different faiths and cultures. Circle time also provides opportunities for pupils to explore moral and social issues and develop a concern for each other. These aspects of the curriculum relate closely to the good care and support systems in the school. The school knows its pupils well and works closely with the different agencies to ensure that different needs are met. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities illustrates this well, with each pupil having an individual education plan from which their targets are set and regularly monitored. Pupils are actively involved and given their targets to take home and, if they wish, put on their wall.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides expertise through her considerable experience as mentor to other headteachers and is well supported by her similarly experienced deputy.

Their style of leadership encourages staff to be involved and take responsibility, especially the two key stage leaders. The development of middle leaders and others is contributing effectively to further school improvement. The key governors are fully involved with staff in the ongoing process of school evaluation and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school is not complacent and its self-evaluation is accurate, if rather cautious, in the grades it awards itself. Governors ensure all statutory requirements are met as well as those relating to safeguarding. As an inclusive school it actively promotes equality of opportunity for its pupils and, through its very close working relationships with the various social and child

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protection agencies, it meets the different needs of its pupils well. It has well-developed links with other schools that enable good and cost-effective staff training and development. The school works hard to get parents involved and the appointment of a liaison worker is helping to further strengthen school-home links. The headteacher and governors have worked together to carry out an audit of its current provision for community cohesion and have agreed a strategy to further improve provision.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in Nursery class with standards that are low for their age, particularly in language development and social skills. Over the next two years, children do a considerable amount of catching up. Although this represents good progress, many are still below expectations when they enter Year 1. Children develop significantly in their confidence and social skills because of the good and supportive teaching. There is an effective balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities that help children develop their basic skills. This is particularly evident in their work in learning sounds and letters as well as recognising and using numbers. Reading is improving steadily, though pupils are taking longer to develop their writing skills.

Teachers and support staff work very much as a team providing varied learning activities that the children enjoy and detailed and informed assessment of each child's progress. The learning areas are attractive but for different reasons, including current building work, the opportunities for children to move freely between indoor and outdoor activities are constrained. Furthermore, while there is a range of apparatus and play activities, these are not consistently well used as part of relevant and thematic learning schemes.

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In all other respects, the provision is good and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and her team have worked well to review and develop teaching and assessment practice. Their efforts have had positive impact and further developing the outside provision is now seen as the next priority

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Although the number of questionnaires returned was relatively low, a representative sample from each year was received. The overwhelming proportion of parents is positive about the school with three parents expressing concerns. The one concern shared by those was behaviour but inspectors were very impressed with pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, especially given the considerable number with emotional, social and behavioural needs. Numerous positive comments stress the positive support their children have had that has enabled them to make good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 177 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	59	12	38	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	56	14	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	56	12	38	0	0	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	66	10	31	0	0	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	20	63	12	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	59	12	38	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	56	14	44	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	56	14	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	56	13	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	53	11	34	3	9	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	53	13	41	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	59	13	41	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	66	9	28	1	3	1	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery, Colchester, CO4 3JP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Yours is a good school where you are making good progress. Your school is certainly a happy, friendly place to be that you all like coming to and feel safe when you are there. We were very impressed with the way you behaved in lessons and around the school. We saw how you were interested and involved in the assemblies and how much you all liked singing. You certainly knew all the words! It was also good to see how many of you are involved in sports and gym activities, as well as playing chess and using computers. Your parents told us how much many of you like school. It is certainly true that you like your teachers and want to do well. We saw you working well together and supporting each other.

We have made a few suggestions to help your school be even better. We think a few of you find some of the work a bit too easy while others find it too hard: we have therefore asked the teachers to make sure that the work they give you is better matched to what you are able to do. In the Nursery and Reception classes we want the adults to make it easier for you to move between indoor and outdoor activities in lessons in order to help you make even better progress.

Mrs Ireland and her staff are doing a good job in helping you learn and prepare for your next school. Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful on our visit

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston

Lead inspector

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