

# Earls Colne Primary School and Nursery

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115312
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338561
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Beale

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.  
The registered childcare provision, 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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	363
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nikki Spelling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Melanie Vine
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Park Lane Earls Colne Essex
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 222205
<b>Fax number</b>	01787 222010
<b>Email address</b>	ecps@earlscolne.essex.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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**Number of children on roll in the registered  
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered  
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 23 lessons and observed all teachers at least once. They held meetings with staff, groups of pupils, and four governors. They scrutinised the school's work, and looked at assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. The team received and analysed 72 parental questionnaires, 99 responses to the Key Stage 2 pupil survey, and 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.

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

- how effectively teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils
- the use of new technology as a tool to support learning
- how the headteacher is building greater capacity for improvement within leadership and management
- the action needed to improve writing for all pupils, but for boys in particular.

## Information about the school

Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds in this above average sized school. Free school meal eligibility is below the national average, but has risen significantly in the last year. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Their needs are mostly associated with moderate learning difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Nursery and two Reception classes. There are some mixed-age classes throughout the school. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status. The new headteacher took up the post in September 2009.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Earls Colne provides a satisfactory quality of education. It has some good features and is starting to improve under the thoughtful leadership of the new headteacher. She has high expectations of everyone and is already starting to make an impact in key areas. Parents recognise the difference she is making, and as one wrote in response to the inspection questionnaire, 'I am very impressed with the new headteacher. I have found her very open, knowledgeable and quick to act'.

Children in the Nursery and Reception make satisfactory progress in all areas of their learning from skills that are as expected for their age on entry to the school. Progress continues at a satisfactory but uneven rate across the rest of the school so that attainment as measured by Year 6 test results is average by the time pupils move on to secondary school. Progress is good in reading and science, but slower in writing, particularly for boys. It is inconsistent in mathematics between classes. Progress is satisfactory for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school provides a safe and welcoming learning environment and works hard to try to ensure that all pupils can be successful in their learning. Pupils are considerate towards each other and work and play happily together. They say that they trust adults to deal with their concerns sensitively. Pupils respond well to the school's recent promotion of better behaviour, and are quite clear about expectations of them in this regard. They feel safe in school and understand how to stay fit and healthy. Pupils are proud of their school, how they contribute to its development and their impact on the life of the local community. Attendance levels have risen to above the national average. Several key factors contribute to the pupils' satisfactory achievement while at the school, including:

- instances of very effective teaching in Years 5 and 6 that engages and enthuses the pupils
- the leadership of the headteacher supported by an effective and well-led governing body
- the close attention paid to the care and support of the more vulnerable pupils
- the close relationship being forged between home and school
- partnerships with others that extend the pupils' learning and support their well-being.

Driving up the impact of teaching on the pupils' learning has been identified by the headteacher as a key priority to smooth out variations in progress and attainment. While there is some outstanding teaching there is also a small proportion that is only just satisfactory. The more effective teaching takes full account of the different ages of

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pupils in classes. The use of assessment in planning lessons that meet the range of pupils' needs, the way teachers engage pupils in their learning and the effectiveness of marking are all areas where practice is variable. The Year 6 work on World War 2 enabled the pupils to develop their writing in context, but these opportunities are quite limited and not sought consistently by all teachers. The school has also recognised that pupils have few opportunities to apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their learning.

The headteacher's incisive evaluation of the school's qualities has enabled her to identify priorities for immediate action. Governors are well-informed and have the confidence to challenge the school. Nevertheless, initiatives such as those to improve teaching and develop the curriculum are new and are only just starting to have an impact. Furthermore, the role of other staff in leading developments in their areas is not always sharply defined. Hence, the school has only satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Accelerate pupils' learning by:
  - making better use of assessment information to plan activities that move the learning of all pupils forward more rapidly
  - adopting strategies that engage pupils more so that they can take greater ownership of their learning
  - ensuring a more consistent approach to marking so that pupils are involved in setting targets and assessing their progress and that of others.
- Develop a more effective curriculum that:
  - makes learning more interesting by linking subjects more closely
  - promotes the development of writing across subjects
  - enables pupils to apply their ICT skills to support learning more consistently and coherently.
- Generate greater capacity for sustaining improvements in the school by developing the role, responsibilities and expertise of other leaders.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

**3**

Pupils respond well to the more stimulating teaching by working hard and being keen to do well. In these lessons, they develop new skills quickly and consolidate their understanding by persevering with tasks set. They greatly enjoy discussing their ideas or answers to questions with their 'talk partner' and collaborate well when working as a group. They work with interest and take care to produce their best work, as seen when

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Year 1 pupils asked and answered questions like a character from 'Hansel and Gretel'. Their discussions generated plenty of ideas and stimulated interest throughout the class. This picture is not consistent across the school and consequently progress is satisfactory rather than good. At times, lessons do not stimulate the pupils' interest or imagination and their efforts slacken. Furthermore, pupils do not regularly apply their basic skills to support their learning across subjects. Pupils generally know their targets but they are not always precise enough to help them to move on.

Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe and deal with risks they might face now or in the future. They recognise the importance for their health of regular exercise and a balanced diet. They are keen to take part in sporting activities and several pupils cycle or use their scooters to school. 'Talk groups' are a powerful forum for the pupils' voice to be heard, and they enjoy their responsibilities around the school. Pupils are keen to be involved in the school's cultural activities, such as drama productions and musical festivals. They show respect for the customs and values of others, are interested in others' beliefs and really appreciated the recent work on India.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

<sup>1</sup> 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 pupils are fully engaged in their learning in the most effective lessons because teachers question them skilfully, use a variety of stimulating activities and make productive use of paired discussion. An excellent example of this was when pupils in a Year 5/6 class identified what they needed to do to be successful in their writing, and were then shown a video clip to stimulate their thinking before working in pairs to think about their 'revolting recipes' in the style of Roald Dahl. These characteristics are not seen in all classrooms, particularly when assessment information is not used effectively to match methods and tasks to the learning needs of all pupils. There is some effective marking, but pupils have few opportunities to assess their work or that of others.

Art is a strong feature and classrooms are bright and colourful with display of the pupils' work. Participation rates are good in the variety of after-school clubs. The expertise of local secondary schools extends opportunities for sport and in the creative arts. Some linking of learning between subjects has been started and the school has identified extending this to make learning more interesting as a priority.

The school 'goes the extra mile' in support of its most vulnerable pupils and their families, calling on the expertise of outside agencies when needed. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, but not all support in classrooms is sharply focused on meeting their individual targets. Thoughtfully planned arrangements when pupils transfer to secondary school help them to be well-prepared and confident.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The new headteacher has started to redefine the school's direction, and is taking staff with her in this. Governors are very aware of her impact, and have identified the need to develop a strong team around her. This is because the leadership skills of other staff have not been developed sufficiently and time is not always available for them to monitor provision and then provide models of good practice for others to observe and learn from.

Various workshops and the 'Parents' Forum' have helped parents feel included in school life, although their views are only just beginning to be taken into account when planning developments. Other partnership work, such as with local schools to extend the curriculum or outside agencies in support of the more vulnerable, makes an effective contribution to the pupils' achievement and personal development.

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Pupils mix happily together, demonstrating the school's success in ensuring that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated. The school is focused on removing any barriers pupils might have that impede their learning. Governors monitor carefully the arrangements to safeguard the welfare of pupils, ensuring that those working in school are properly vetted. Responsibilities are clear and training up to date. Many activities are undertaken to help the school and the community pull together. Having carefully audited their effectiveness and considered the context within which it works, the school has implemented comprehensive plans to extend its impact including engaging more with groups beyond the immediate locality.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Arrangements to help the children settle in are carefully planned and give them a smooth start to their school life. One parent reflected this when writing, 'My daughter only started in January, and I have nothing but praise for the way the school has helped her to settle in.' Social skills are developed well in the Nursery and as a result the children learn to work together productively. Most children develop independence here, and can initiate their own learning. There are more opportunities for them to make choices about the activities they will engage with in the Nursery than in Reception, where activities are too adult directed at times so the children do not sufficiently build on their ability to investigate or become independent. Continual assessments are made of each child's progress, but these are not always used effectively to plan how activities might be adapted to move their learning forward more rapidly.

Adults are rigorous in ensuring the welfare of the children, so they are well cared for



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and feel happy and safe. The children's behaviour is good across all classes. Close relationships with home, help parents to feel fully involved in their children's start to school. However, provision is not cohesive across the classes in part because of discontinuity in leadership arrangements. Hence, the good features in the Nursery are not always seen in Reception and vice versa. The headteacher has identified this problem and identified the necessary steps to be taken to reduce its impact on the children's development.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

**Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are largely in support of the work of the school, as shown by the proportion of positive responses and comments to the questionnaire. Almost all report that their children enjoy school. They are pleased with the way their children are kept safe and how the school helps them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The inspection team agrees with the concerns of a small number of parents about how well the school meets the specific needs of their children or takes their views into account. However, it found no evidence to support their concerns about how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour or prepares pupils for the next stage of their learning.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Earls Colne Primary 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 304 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	49	34	47	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	28	39	41	57	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	25	46	65	5	7	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	32	43	60	5	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	22	31	46	64	3	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	32	41	57	7	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	38	42	58	3	4	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)	11	16	42	60	9	13	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	24	42	58	11	15	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	19	45	63	11	15	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	28	41	58	10	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	39	37	52	4	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	30	42	37	51	4	6	0	0

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Earls Colne Primary School and Nursery, Earls Colne, CO6 2RH

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take good care of you. You behave well and those of you who have special jobs such as on the school council carry out your duties responsibly. You also make a considerable contribution to the local community. It was good to see several of you cycling to school or coming on your scooter. Thank you for sharing your views with us. You make satisfactory progress during your time in school and the attainment of the majority of you is as expected for your age by the time you leave in Year 6.

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. The three things we have asked them to do are to:

- plan lessons to help all of you learn better, involve you more in your learning and make marking more helpful
- provide you with more opportunities across subjects to develop your writing and information and communication technology skills
- make sure everyone focuses on improving your progress and helping teachers to develop their teaching skills.

I am sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to show pride in your school and working hard.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector

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