

# Highbury Infant School and Nursery

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117113
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338949
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sue Rogers

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.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	178
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs H Dudley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs H Avey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Standhill Road Hitchin Hertfordshire
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 630500
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 630502
<b>Email address</b>	admin@highbury.herts.sch.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–7
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	338949

**Number of children on roll in the registered  
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered  
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 16 part lessons, visited all classrooms to sample displays, behaviour and resources and held meetings or discussions with governors, staff, parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and examined pupils' books and school documents including the school development plan, safety records and assessment information. They analysed questionnaires returned by staff, pupils and parents. Inspectors looked in detail at the following:

the progress made by all groups of pupils, especially the more able

- the quality of personal development outcomes and of care, guidance and support for pupils
- outcomes and the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the work of the school in developing teaching and the curriculum
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, especially that of middle managers.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized infant school, with a nursery. It offers 'wrap around care' in the form of a breakfast club and after-school and holiday-time childcare. The after-school and holiday care is provided by the externally managed Hitchin Fun Club. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little lower than is usual. Most of these pupils have language or behavioural difficulties. A few pupils use English as an additional language, but numbers are low compared to national averages. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark for physical education.

**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

Highbury School continues to improve and to provide a good education for its pupils. Exceptionally good relationships and a happy, stimulating atmosphere ensure that children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes, make good progress through the rest of the school and do outstandingly well in their personal development. Questionnaire returns show that parents are very happy with the school and confident it is well managed. They typically make responses such as 'I could not wish for more.' They have special praise for the headteacher, with, for example, parents stating that 'She is lovely with the children' and 'very committed and hardworking.' The leadership team, pupils and staff also stress how much they enjoy their work together and refer to the high quality of whole-school teamwork. These comments are borne out by inspection findings.

Excellent relationships formed in the Early Years Foundation Stage underpin children's outstanding progress in all areas of their learning in the Nursery and Reception classes. Taking into account their starting points, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics to reach above-average standards by the end of Year 2. This is because pupils benefit from a lively, well-planned curriculum and good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Those pupils who are more able achieve above-average results, but are not challenged consistently enough for them to reach levels that are significantly high. Many aspects of teaching are strong and engaging. For instance, teachers have worked hard to develop the use of assessment, with much success. However, they are not yet giving consistent enough feedback on how to improve when they mark pupils' books.

Throughout the school, care, guidance and support are outstanding. As a result, learners' behaviour and attitudes to their work are excellent. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is also exceptional, with learners particularly enjoying opportunities to learn about other faiths. The school's awards testify to pupils' outstanding progress in learning to be healthy, through very well-planned schemes of work and good physical education. Pupils appreciate the fact that teachers often consult with them to find out what they think of lessons. They recognise that teachers act on what they say.

Leaders and managers clearly identify the strengths of the provision and the important areas for development. This good self-evaluation has led to improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, boys' achievements in English, aspects of assessment, and the work of middle managers since the last inspection. The school, therefore, has a good capacity to improve further

**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

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

- Improve teaching by the end of the current academic year, so that it is always at least good or better by:
  - ensuring that teachers make consistently good use of activity planning and questioning to challenge more-able pupils more effectively
  - making sure that pupils consistently understand, through feedback and marking, what they are expected to do to improve their work.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Achievement is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage and good in Key Stage 1. Consequently, pupils achieve levels that are above average by the time they leave Year 2. Results in the end of Year 2 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, have been consistently good for several years. Moreover, the school has recently been very successful in reducing the number of pupils with below average scores. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress across the school because of well-planned support. Leaders have, correctly, focused on continuing to improve English and mathematics by increasing the amount of practical work. They are also successfully developing the learning of letter sounds, and try to make sure that children understand the links between this knowledge and their writing. The proportion of boys achieving average or above-average levels in English has increased, due to the carefully thought out introduction of subject matter more suited to boys and more role play. More-able pupils make good progress, but planning and support are not always focused enough to be sure that they do as well as possible. Overall outcomes are outstanding as pupils do so well in their personal development. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons and work very hard, persevering even when they are unsure what to do. Attendance is above the national average. Pupils collaborate very well in the classroom and are polite and helpful. They have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Learners benefit from numerous opportunities to reflect on the world and their part in it and to learn about other cultures. Pupils enjoy helping others and have, for instance, contributed much to the local community through their harvest celebrations and through carol singing. The school council is a highly effective means of representing the views of the pupils. Learners say that they feel safe and develop increasing confidence. The school works very hard to support children to settle into the Early Years Foundation Stage and from this phase into Year 1. Pupils are also helped to gain a good understanding of the world of work through events, such as the popular 'come as what you want to be when you grow up day'.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

**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

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

### How effective is the provision?

The school is a highly caring community, where pupils' welfare is a key priority. As a result, pupils feel safe and parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after. Staff management of behaviour is excellent and provision for pupils' personal development is a key strength, reflected in pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning. Leaders are ensuring that staff continue to develop their skills, and school records show clear improvement in the quality of teaching. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that lessons are fun. Teachers, for example, were seen using 'Red Riding Hood' role play, and practical, lively mathematical challenges to maintain interest. Teachers have worked hard to improve their day-to-day assessment, and to ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of what they are learning and where they have improved. This is often done exceptionally well during oral sessions. Feedback is less well developed in the pupils' books, where it is sometimes unclear what needs to be followed up. Tracking of pupils' progress is very good in English, mathematics and science. It is still being developed in other subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs include those with behavioural and language difficulties. These pupils are exceptionally well supported throughout the school, as are pupils who require help because they use English as an additional language. The school effectively evaluates needs and supports pupils with very good use of teaching assistants. Excellent multi-agency partnerships are also key in supporting pupils with any

<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.

**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

type of learning difficulty. Although all pupils do well, planning is not always sufficiently detailed to ensure that expectations of more-able pupils in Key Stage 1 are high enough. There is a good range of clubs to enrich learning opportunities, and pupils participate enthusiastically in themed events, such as 'book week' and 'science days', which help to bring learning alive.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

### How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher works very well with her senior colleagues and subject leaders. They share a common vision to improve the school further and are ably supported by an effective governing body. Governors are very well informed, active and hold the school to account for its performance in a positive, supportive manner. Subject leaders are confident in knowing what they have to do to improve still further. Monitoring is systematic and effective. It is not documented clearly enough in school planning but, in this small school, teamwork and verbal communication are very good, and everyone has an understanding of what is expected.

Systems for ensuring safeguarding of pupils are good. The school is very aware of all issues relating to equality of opportunity. Leaders have focused successfully on boys' achievement and are now looking to raise attainment further for more-able pupils. Partnerships with parents are exemplary; parents are extremely happy with the school and with their involvement in different aspects of school life. Leaders have good plans for developing community cohesion and have useful links with schools and businesses, locally, nationally, and internationally. Partnerships with other schools and with agencies are also very strong, taking into account the age of the pupils.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>1</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Excellent leadership and teamwork result in outstanding progress. From starting points that are broadly in line with typical expectations for the age group, most children reach all the expected early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Many exceed these goals in a number of areas. This is a result of first-rate teaching that is lively and well matched to childrens' needs. Teachers plan their lessons well, having an active understanding of how young children learn. They explain very clearly, and know just when to intervene with well-judged support, and when to stand back and let the children work out their learning for themselves. Children have ample opportunities to use the well-organised outside environment. Smiles and laughter are everywhere as children discover that learning is fun. For example, Nursery children were entranced as they identified sounds mysteriously coming from behind a curtain, helping them to articulate their letters. Very effective induction procedures and exceptionally good care help children to settle in quickly, learn to cooperate with others and behave well. Consequently, they thoroughly enjoy school and highly positive relationships are formed.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents were positive in response to all the questions in the questionnaire and thought that the school was very effective. Many praised the headteacher and the quality of the staff. A very few parents expressed concern about differing aspects of the school or its provision. These comments were all investigated, but there was no evidence found to substantiate these views.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highbury Infant and Nursery School 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 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 178 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	77	14	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	67	21	33	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	48	31	48	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	50	28	44	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	35	55	28	44	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	47	29	45	4	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	52	29	45	1	2	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)	28	44	29	45	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	52	25	39	3	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	47	27	42	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	44	31	48	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	49	77	14	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	79	11	18	2	3	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.**



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highbury Infant School and Nursery, Standhill Road, Hitchin, SG4 9AG

Thank you very much for helping the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing you learning. Special thanks to the children who gave up some time to meet us.

I was very impressed to hear how much you enjoy school. We agree with you that Highbury is a good school. You achieve well in your lessons and outstandingly in your personal development. This is because you all get on together very happily and the staff look after you so well. You told us that you felt safe; your behaviour is very good. The headteacher and teachers work very hard and the teaching is good, especially in the Reception and Nursery classes. You were keen to tell us how much fun you have in lessons. We were very happy to see that you learn to keep very fit and you know a great deal about health. We were very interested too in hearing about the many ways in which you help improve the school and your local area, by talking to the teachers and telling them what you think.

Many things about your school are already very good. We have asked the teachers to make it even better by making sure that your work is as challenging as possible in every lesson. We have also asked them to write down the comments and advice about how well you are learning that they make to you in lessons. When you look at your books, this will help you remember what you have to do to improve.

With very best wishes for even more success

Yours sincerely

Sue Rogers

Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**