

Hertford Heath Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117125
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338955
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2010
Reporting inspector	John William Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr W J Worthington
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Smith
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Eight lessons and a few small groups were observed at work, involving nine teachers. Meetings with groups of pupils, staff and governors were held. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation related to safeguarding, tracking of pupils' progress and leaders' and managers' monitoring and evaluations of the school's performance. Parents and carers returned 97 questionnaires and their responses were analysed and taken into account.

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

- whether senior leaders are correct in evaluating pupils' achievement as good
- how consistently teaching across the school results in good learning and progress
- the quality of outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage related to how well free-flow, child-initiated and adult-directed activities are planned and provided
- whether outcomes related to pupils' personal development are as consistently strong as senior leaders indicate in their self-evaluations, especially in relation to pupils' feelings of safety and well-being.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school, although its roll is increasing. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is a little below average. A significant number of these experience specific difficulties with speech and language.

The school runs its own breakfast and after school clubs and an independently managed playgroup uses its Nursery facilities during the afternoons. The school holds Healthy Schools and ActiveMark awards.

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

Senior and subject leaders at this good school evaluate its performance carefully and accurately. They use information that they gather to set realistic targets for improvement. They are successful in ensuring that achievement is good, including in the Nursery and Reception classes. These findings indicate that leaders' capacity for sustaining improvement is also good. Attainment fluctuates a little from year to year. Currently it is average by Year 6, although in some years it is a little above. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points in Year 2. Leaders have correctly identified that results in writing are not as good as in other subjects and, since the last inspection, have introduced a range of initiatives that are successfully raising standards. The latest of these, while successfully in place, has not had time to embed fully in the curriculum. Pupils know a considerable amount about healthy foods and the importance of exercise to stay fit and explain convincingly how they live up to this. They say they feel very safe in school and that they are particularly confident in the staff's care of them, including in the breakfast and after school clubs. This is born out in pupils' and parents' overwhelming responses about safety in questionnaires. It is underpinned by exceptionally thorough systems for managing the safeguarding of pupils, staff vetting procedures and arrangements for assessing risk. This is typified, for example, in the high proportions, including governors, who undergo training to ensure exemplary practice. Other outcomes, including pupils' behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.

Teaching is good, ensuring good learning and progress. On occasions when an individual's progress appears to slow, leaders seek reasons and use the answers to reverse the situation. Some teaching is outstanding, not least because strong collaboration amongst the staff results in sharing methods that are found to work. Formal systems for tracking progress are thorough and ensure good progress amongst different groups, including boys and girls. Marking is conscientiously up to date. It is, however, inconsistent in offering pupils information about what to do next to improve. Marking is often good in pupils' writing projects, less so in other work. Further improvements to a good curriculum are underway, increasing its relevance to pupils' particular needs. Creative strengths and cross-curricular themes are often evident.

Good leadership is evident, building partnerships and community cohesion, and establishing equal opportunities well. Action plans are formed to ensure that improvement is continuous and areas of excellence are maintained. For example, monitoring indicates that the increasing number of pupils attending the school is causing a strain on accommodation. Younger pupils, for example, when grouped for focused phonic work, do not have sufficient space away from other groups, so that learning is

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not always uninterrupted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, by
 - ensuring that marking always provides information about what pupils should do next to improve their work
 - fully embedding the new approach to developing writing skills.
- Review whether accommodation can be adapted, used differently or extended to provide more appropriate spaces for group learning, especially during sessions when focused teaching is required.

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

Learning and progress are good. This is apparent in a large majority of lessons. Older pupils concentrate very well on tasks that are set, demonstrating good behaviour and a willingness to carry out learning tasks conscientiously. As a result, they acquire knowledge and skills across the curriculum securely and effectively. In a lesson in Year 5, for example, pupils learnt very successfully how to check the position of shapes after reflection. In Year 3, skills in throwing a ball accurately and hitting with a racquet improved dramatically, owing to pacy, knowledgeable teaching. Good progress is similarly apparent from the school's carefully recorded tracking and assessment files. These indicate high proportions of pupils making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, whatever their starting points. This is the case for pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs and disabilities. In the current Year 6, progress in English and mathematics books bears out these findings. An emphasis on writing, using a recently introduced scheme, has been taken on full-heartedly by teachers and teaching assistants. This inspires boys and girls equally and is already producing good results, raising pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Good achievement and enjoyment are also evident amongst younger pupils. In the past, results at the end of Year 2 have often been below average. This is changing. Consistently good teaching means that progress in Years 1 and 2 is often rapid, leading to currently above average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. In Year 2, pupils were observed working practically on word problems. Depending on their ability, they were supported or challenged to find combinations of different complexity that made up two-digit numbers. They used mathematical apparatus very effectively, coming to accurate conclusions, because teaching prepared them highly skilfully and support for pupils who needed it was good.

Pupils' understanding of healthy living and keeping safe is outstanding. Other outcomes are good. For example, pupils understand the need for rules and cooperate with staff and each other effectively. This links well with their above average attendance, good progress in basic skills, and ensures good development for the future. Pupils contribute well to the school community, carrying out a range of jobs and activities around the building, including the production of a pupils' newspaper by an enterprising group in

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Year 6. School councillors contribute well to raising staff awareness of matters that concern or involve pupils. Nearly all pupils who were asked expressed the view that bullying and unacceptable behaviour are rare, that they are taken seriously by the headteacher and staff, and usually resolved quickly. This contributes further to their strong feelings of safety. Inspectors found no reason to disagree with them. Cultural and spiritual development is good in art and music and pupils contribute well to the wider community, singing in a range of localities beyond the school, especially at locally organised children's concerts and during seasonal festivals.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good, which is also the view of a large majority of parents expressed in questionnaires. Arrangements for formal assessments are thorough and teachers use this information effectively to adapt planning to meet different needs, which contributes well to learning and progress. Good teamwork and morale are such that staff share ideas, resources and planning effectively, so others can make use of their successes. During the inspection, the impact of these qualities was apparent in a

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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large majority of lessons, including some that were outstanding. Teaching was never less than satisfactory. Teaching is nearly always pacy and characterised by good questioning based on ongoing assessments of pupils' responses. Marking is kept up to date and encourages pupils well; although it does not consistently tell them what they should do next to improve their work. Good planning is based on a good curriculum that includes all the subjects that it should and includes interesting themes, helping pupils to engage well with what is taught. These are enriched effectively with visits, visitors, and after school clubs. French and instrumental music add further enrichment. That said, suitable places to accommodate some types of teaching, including instrumental lessons, are on occasions hard to find. The building has no rooms that are not already dedicated to other uses and compromises over available space then have to be found. As all the staff work well as a team, this happens seamlessly. However, such conditions are not always ideal for learning. Partnerships with outside agencies are pursued with particular care, so tailored advice and support are sought and acted on. As a result, pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported effectively. Policies and procedures related to the safety and well-being of pupils are exceptionally thorough and carried out meticulously. Pupils' views and ideas are sought during site risk assessments and these views are acted on whenever relevant. Guidance for pupils, particularly for social or emotional difficulties, is highly sensitive and very thoughtful, so interruption to learning is minimised.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Good expertise amongst senior and subject leaders is ensuring good quality teaching, which leads to good learning and progress. Key governors know the school well, support its strategic direction and are willing to ask questions and contribute ideas. Statutory safeguarding procedures are fully in place and carried out highly conscientiously. Staff vetting, updating of first-aid training, child protection and risk assessment are rigorous. Governors understand their responsibilities in monitoring these important policies. Audits of the school's impact on local and wider communities have been carried out well. These indicate correctly that involvement locally is strong, although not enough is done to build relationships with communities further afield. An action plan is in place already and its direction for the future matches the identified needs well. The headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has ensured strong procedures for correcting any kind of

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racist or social intolerance and records indicate that incidents are very rare indeed. Equal opportunities are maintained effectively, because targeting of work, support and guidance for pupils with different types of additional need are provided consistently. The school's many strengths mean that good value for money is achieved.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with skills that range widely from above to below what is usually found. However, speech and language development is often low, with mathematics and social skills close to expectations. Good relationships with an on-site playgroup and good induction procedures, including visits for families, help children settle quickly. Good learning and development follow. Most children now reach age-related goals by the start of Year 1. In Nursery and Reception classes, children know 'what is good for you' and choose snacks accordingly. They go about activities contentedly, enjoying what they do and achieving well. They behave well and very safely. Overall, outcomes are good.

Good teaching and a carefully planned curriculum provide well resourced activities, balanced between those led by staff and those chosen by children. The outside area engages children's interest successfully. Sheltered space permits outdoor learning even during inclement weather. Adults record effectively how each child responds to teaching. This information is used well to plan the next stages in learning and is shared effectively with parents. Systems to monitor and track progress are thorough. All the staff target the needs of individuals across all areas of learning effectively. Welfare arrangements

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for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

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

A high proportion of parents are pleased with what is provided and indicate that their children are well looked after and feel safe and happy at school. They feel that teaching is good and that their children make good progress. A small, but significant proportion feel that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with well. Inspectors investigated this concern. No poor behaviour occurred during the inspection and little evidence of any was logged in the school's record books. What little was found appeared to have been dealt with appropriately and pupils themselves agreed with inspectors that this is the case, feeling that the headteacher and staff are fair.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hertford Heath Primary 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 97 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 209 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	53	45	46	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	60	62	36	37	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	35	53	55	6	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	42	47	48	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	48	42	43	4	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	36	53	55	6	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	48	50	52	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)	44	45	43	44	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	43	49	51	4	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	33	44	45	13	13	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	28	57	59	7	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	44	45	44	45	2	2	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	51	41	42	6	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"> ■ 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.



24 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hertford Heath Primary and Nursery School, Hertford, SG13 7QW

Thank you for your helpfulness during the two days when my colleagues and I inspected your school. You were well behaved, polite and friendly. We enjoyed speaking to you outside in the playground and in the classrooms, and seeing your work. We were very pleased to hear so many of you say that you enjoy school. We spoke also to your school councillors about their role. They told us that they think your school is good. We agree with this comment. It is indeed a good school.

Here are some important things that we found out about your school.

Your learning and progress are good, including in the Nursery and Reception classes. You are considerate and tolerant towards each other, playing and working well together. The staff care for you exceptionally well, offering you strong support and very good guidance.

The teachers teach you well, although we have asked them to give you more information in their marking about how you can improve your work for yourselves and to keep focusing on your writing.

You know a great deal about how to stay safe, eat healthily and know that exercise is very important. You have good ideas for living up to all of this.

You are outstandingly willing to do things that help your teachers and contribute well to the locality.

Your headteacher, governors and staff have good ideas about how to make your school even better. You can help by telling them your ideas through the school council and at other times.

The three of us wish you every success in the future and hope you will always enjoy school as much as you told us you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W. Paull

Lead Inspector

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