

Hamilton Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123994
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	340469
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Fisher

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip Shemilt
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Bloor
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Barthomley Road Birches Head Stoke-on-Trent ST1 6NW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons or parts of lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school development plan, a range of school policies, teachers' planning, assessment files and records of pupils' progress. Members of staff completed questionnaires and 59 parental questionnaires were also read and analysed.

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

- standards in Key Stage 1, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics
- how effectively the school uses assessment information to promote pupils' progress
- how effectively the school promotes pupils' engagement with people of different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs
- how effectively teaching meets the needs of all pupils.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a purpose built Nursery and two Reception classes. The school has Healthy Schools and Investors in People status.

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

3

Main findings

The school provides a good education for its pupils, who make good progress in their learning and their social development. The quality of teaching and the care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good. Pupils are happy at school; they say that they are safe and that their lessons are fun. They have good relationships with their teachers; behave well in lessons and around the school and work enthusiastically. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. 'The teachers encourage and nurture their enthusiasm to learn' is typical of the many positive comments made by parents and carers.

Children start the school with skills and levels of understanding well below those typically expected of three-year-olds, particularly in their communication skills and their understanding of number. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and, by the age of five, their standards are below average. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1, so that by the end of Year 2, their standards are broadly average in reading and writing, though still below average in mathematics. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well targeted support and they too, make good progress.

Whilst it is good overall, the quality of teaching varies. School leaders are taking positive steps to achieve greater consistency in teaching by supporting lesson planning, developing a curriculum which meets pupils' needs and providing training for staff. However, these steps are not sufficiently embedded or consistently applied in order to bring about consistent and sustained improvement, particularly in how to accurately assess pupils' learning and progress in writing and mathematics, or how to use that information to enable pupils to improve their standards.

The school provides a broad range of stimulating activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The nurturing environment successfully promotes children's self confidence, their ability to form good relationships with others and the development of their enquiry skills, though the quality of provision for children to investigate and play outdoors does not match that for indoor learning. Adults' assessment skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not well developed and the lack of consistently accurate assessment information means that teachers do not always plan appropriately challenging activities for children.

Good links are established with other local schools, a nearby Children's Centre and with a range of agencies working in the area on behalf of children and families.

The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and though the school has many strengths and pupils make good progress from their

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starting points, a number of relatively recent changes in teaching staff and the lack of accuracy in some of the school's assessment practice mean that a focus on drive and improvement is not firmly embedded at all levels.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 by:
 - regularly and accurately assessing pupils' attainment
 - using assessment information to provide activities that build progressively on pupils' previous learning
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of provision and challenge underachievement where it is identified.
- Accurately assess children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and use the information to plan purposeful and appropriately challenging activities, both in and out of doors.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress in lessons and attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Overall, standards have remained close to the national average for the last three years, though the 2009 teacher assessment results were lower than for previous years, particularly in mathematics. Pupils make good gains in the development of their reading and writing skills as they move through the school, particularly in Year 2. The school's emphasis on investigations in mathematics is helping pupils to improve their thinking and calculation skills, and evidence from lesson observations, the study of pupils' work and from conversations with pupils, indicates that outcomes for pupils are on track to be broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the school year.

Pupils concentrate very well in lessons. They respond enthusiastically to the tasks set for them and are keen to do their best. When asked to discuss things amongst themselves, pupils do so readily and they make good progress in the development of their speaking and listening skills. Pupils throughout the school clearly enjoy their lessons. They say that they particularly enjoy the music, physical education and the after school activities provided for them. Their behaviour is almost always good; in the playground, the dining hall and in school assembly it is exemplary.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to maintain their general health and well-being and to stay safe. For example, they articulately explain why the playground gates and external doors are locked. They describe the types of human teeth, the importance of looking after them and how to do so. Pupils say that adults in the school look after them well and they are confident that they can talk to an adult if they have an issue, knowing that they will be listened to and helped.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils relate to each other well and are proud of their school. A wide range of visits from and

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visitors to the school give them a good understanding of their local community, though their knowledge of the diversity of the wider world is less well developed.

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	3

How effective is the provision?

Strengths in the quality of teaching include the very good rapport with and management of pupils, the use of adult support for groups of pupils of different abilities and the provision of challenging and interesting activities which require pupils to respond at a quick pace. For example, in a Year 2 phonics session, the teacher used a sand timer to challenge pupils and their 'chatty partners' to produce and write lists of compound words. Pupils responded with great enthusiasm to listed words such as 'milkshake' and 'ladybird'. Teachers use information and communication technology equipment well in their teaching, though pupils have comparatively few opportunities to use the interactive whiteboards. Teachers plan activities that meet the needs of different groups of pupils, though their questioning of pupils in lesson introductions does not always discriminate between pupils of different abilities. There are good examples of teachers telling and showing pupils how they can improve their work, but this practice is not consistently

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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applied, to help pupils improve their writing, for example.

The school is developing a 'creative curriculum'. This places an emphasis upon making meaningful links between National Curriculum subjects and allowing pupils to develop their ideas over a series of lessons. Good examples of this were seen in Year 1, where pupils develop their literacy skills through the study of historical characters such as Florence Nightingale. Also in Year 2 where, in a literacy lesson around the theme of space travel, pupils were applying their scientific knowledge and using a Venn Diagram to describe, quite fluently, the articles they would, might and would not need to take with them to travel to and survive on another planet. Though the curriculum is planned to make learning enjoyable for pupils, activities do not always take sufficient account of pupils' prior learning and challenge pupils of all levels of ability. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities which include music, sport and science.

The quality of the care, guidance and support provided by the school is good. The school promotes pupils' good behaviour and the development of their social skills exceptionally well. It gives effective support to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to vulnerable pupils. The school has effective procedures for the encouraging attendance, which is slowly improving.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team is motivated to seek further improvement in pupils' standards in literacy and numeracy and is successfully monitoring, supporting and developing the quality of teaching and learning with the focus on the school's 'creative curriculum'. Leaders understand what needs to be done to accelerate progress. For example, the monitoring and supporting roles of the school's subject leaders are comparatively under-developed and the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress are not widely and effectively used. Members of the governing body are becoming increasingly involved in helping to set priorities for improvement and in developing the school's engagement with its local community. The school's plans for engagement with a range of groups beyond the immediate community are at an early stage of development.

The school has very positive relationships with most groups of parents and carers. The school's systems for keeping parents informed run very smoothly and parents and carers speak very highly of the school. The school's effective partnerships with the local authority and its agencies are effective. The school's logo incorporates the words

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'Everyone at Hamilton is special' and all adults at the school clearly demonstrate this. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is not tolerated. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils and for child protection are good and meet statutory requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
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

The school has good induction arrangements, which enable children to settle quickly and happily and which give parents and carers a good understanding of how they can be involved in and support their children's learning. The majority of children make good progress relative to their starting points, particularly in their personal and social development, though progress in the development of their writing and calculation skills is not as rapid. Children behave very well. They take turns, share resources and demonstrate good levels of independence and concentration in their learning. For example, the youngest children used scissors, glue and coloured paper to carefully make calendars with an adult, whilst a group of others independently decided to make 'castles' in a sand tray. The attractive and well organised accommodation in the Nursery and Reception classes promotes a wide range of interesting and enjoyable experiences for the children. All welfare requirements are met. Adults have a good rapport with the children, who respond well to instructions and questions. Teachers plan together effectively and place a strong emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. There is a good balance between adult led and child initiated activity but the quality of provision for outdoor learning and play does not match that of the indoor provision and so limits the extent to which children can develop.

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Adults regularly assess day-to-day learning but assessment information is not always secure enough for teachers to be able to plan the next steps for children accurately enough. For example, some assessments are made very shortly after a skill or process has been taught, which does not enable the adult to be certain that the child has understood and can apply their knowledge in a range of situations.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A majority of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire and most were very positive in their endorsement of the school. Many took the opportunity to write additional comments in praise of the school. 'I feel very privileged to have this school within our catchment area' and 'the staff always have the children's best interest at the forefront of their teaching' are typical of the comments made. A small minority believed that their children were not being properly supported to overcome their learning difficulties. Inspectors found that provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties is good. A few believed that behaviour was not well managed. Inspectors saw good behaviour and any minor disruptions were managed very well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hamilton Infants' 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 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	78	13	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	75	14	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	58	19	32	2	3	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	53	23	39	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	64	16	27	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	53	23	39	1	2	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	68	17	29	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)	35	59	16	27	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	63	17	29	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	53	23	39	3	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	51	21	36	5	8	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	38	64	18	31	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	63	19	32	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"> ■ 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.



8 December 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Hamilton Infants' School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 6NW

On behalf of the team, thank you very much for being so friendly and welcoming when we inspected your school recently. I am writing to you to tell you the main things that we found out.

Your school is a good school. We were very impressed by how well you all get on with each other, how much you enjoy school and by the progress that you make as you move through the school. You show great enthusiasm in lessons and when you are asked to work in pairs or small groups, you cooperate successfully and concentrate on what you are supposed to be doing. You know how to keep yourselves safe and about the importance of staying healthy. We enjoyed talking to you and are pleased that you appreciate the activities that your teachers provide, such as the 'Songbirds' choir, the music lessons and the after school clubs.

I have asked your headteacher, the governors and the staff to do the following things to make your school even better:

- help you to reach higher standards in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 by making sure that your teachers know the levels that you are working at and that they show you what you need to do to progress to the next level
- make sure that teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes accurately measure how well you are doing and provide you with more opportunities to investigate and play outside.

You can help by continuing to do your very best, as I am confident that you will.

Keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Fisher

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