

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Hamstel Infant School and Nursery

Hamstel Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 4PQ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 October 2024

Outcome

Hamstel Infant School and Nursery has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Scott Roche. This school is part of Portico Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Cheryl Woolf, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Karen Packer.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's mantra of 'happy staff make for happy children' is clear to see. Children quickly form trusting and warm relationships with each other and with adults. Key stage 1 pupils are good role models for their younger counterparts. Their behaviours reflect the school's values and so they develop into caring and respectful individuals who have a clear sense of what is right and wrong. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

The school is ambitious for what children at this age can learn and do. Most children in the early years promptly gain independence, for instance, through playing with equipment and following the woodland trails in the outdoor learning area. The joys of exploration and discovery continue through their time at school, whether this is learning at the beach or visiting the local library. There is a wealth of activities for pupils to experience. This includes pupils who attend the special educational needs (SEN) unit. They access the school's many clubs with support.

Leadership opportunities, such as being part of the media, eco- or well-being teams, help pupils learn to contribute to their community. This stands them in good stead for when they go to the junior school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's curriculum is well established. Over time, the school has refined and adjusted what pupils learn so they achieve their best. For example, pupils receive extra support to practise their recall of number facts. This helps them with their problem-solving skills in mathematics. The close attention to pupils' learning needs, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is paying dividends. Children and pupils learn to read quickly and confidently. This is demonstrated through the school's high outcomes with the phonics screening check. Older pupils are enthusiastic readers. They are proud to read what they call, 'the bigger chapter books'.

Staff have a thirsty appetite for using the latest educational research to help shape their delivery of the curriculum. They engage well with the school's actions to improve children's and pupils' oracy. The impact of this improvement strategy is beginning to bear fruit. For example, in early years, adults helpfully model answers to questions. They deliberately use ambitious vocabulary in their interactions. In key stage 1, staff help pupils extend their individual viewpoints through the prompts they use. As a result, children and pupils widen their use of vocabulary and connect their ideas fluently. The precise checking of what pupils know and can do means that pupils in the SEN unit learn the communication skills they need to thrive and succeed.

The school identifies children's needs quickly and accurately. Many children enter with speech, language and communication needs. At the request of the local authority, the school has recently expanded its provision. There are now more pupils in key stage 1 who are learning to speak English and some pupils who have not attended a school setting before. The school has ensured that pupils receive the support they need, including from external professionals. For example, the bespoke training from therapists for support staff is making a difference with the strategies they use to improve pupils' speech and phonics knowledge. These groups of pupils are making a positive start with learning to communicate, read and write. This change to the school's context has been handled well. There has been little impact on staff workload.

The longer that disadvantaged pupils are in the school, the greater the ground they make up in their learning. Staff prioritise providing 'spotlight children' with the extra resources and help they need. However, due to absence, some of these pupils miss out on important learning and socialisation. The school knows it must continue to support families to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils as well as work with those children in Reception who take longer with their personal, social and emotional development.

The wide-ranging provision for personal development ensures that pupils develop respect, empathy and kindness. Pupils behave remarkably well. The school's values permeate the curriculum. Pupils take part in a variety of enrichment activities that help prepare them well for later life. This includes learning mini first aid, raising money for mental health charities and visiting places of worship to learn about faith.

Trustees have an accurate understanding of the school and the quality of its provision. They provide valuable support and appropriate challenge. Staff benefit from the trust's networking opportunities to swap ideas of best practice.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's strategies for raising the achievement and attendance of some disadvantaged pupils are taking time to have the desired impact. Some children and pupils are taking longer to develop their social and speech, language and communication skills. Some are not attending school regularly. The school should continue its work to resolve barriers to learning and ensure high-quality delivery of oracy so that disadvantaged pupils, like their peers, achieve well and can apply their learning in a variety of contexts.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	143340
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10345457
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	463
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karen Packer
CEO of the trust	Cheryl Woolf
Principal	Scott Roche
Website	www.hamstelinfants.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new principal has joined the school.
- The school uses one unregistered provider for therapeutic alternative provision.
- The pupil capacity in the SEN unit has increased recently. It now caters for eight pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- Since the start of September 2024, the school has expanded the number of Year 2 classes from four to five.
- The Nursery provides two sessions a day, morning and afternoon.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the chair of the trust, trustees, the CEO and the director of learning for the trust. She also discussed the school's provision with the principal, senior leaders and staff.
- The inspector considered the improvements that leaders are undertaking in the school, such as the development of the oracy curriculum.
- The inspector spoke to representatives of the local authority regarding the provision in the SEN unit.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their personal development and experiences of behaviour. She observed pupils in lessons and during their social time.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text comments that were submitted. She also took account of the responses to the confidential Ofsted staff survey. She gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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