

Inspection of a good school: Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery

Hawthorn Avenue, Colchester, Essex CO4 3JP

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school. Pupils arrive in the morning keen to learn. They love taking part in lessons, especially their music lessons with the glockenspiels. Teachers work very hard to provide learning opportunities that interest pupils. However, a significant number of pupils cannot read well enough by the end of Year 2.

Pupils look forward to breaktimes and lunchtimes and like playing with their friends. They take turns, are thoughtful, and play together amiably. They enjoy and use the equipment available to them, including the outdoor gym and basketball hoop. Pupils say that it is easy to make friends and that bullying does not happen often. They are confident that staff take good care of them. Pupils are kept safe.

Most pupils behave well, including the youngest children. When a few pupils struggle, staff help them to manage their behaviour. Pupils say that behaviour has improved a lot this year. However, a small core of pupils still sometimes struggle to behave well.

Older pupils are good role models for younger children. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as the new reading ambassadors. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support that the school provides to their children.

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

Leaders, alongside staff, work incredibly hard to look after pupils. They manage effectively individual incidents related to safeguarding, behaviour and bullying. They are striving to bring about improvements in the school. For example, too many pupils' attendance has

been poor for some time. The school's recent work this year is showing some significant early signs of improvement for these pupils.

However, leaders and governors do not know well enough the difference that the school makes over a sustained period to the achievement, behaviour, attendance and progress of pupils. This includes for the relatively high levels of pupils arriving mid-way through the school year and high numbers of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The school has focused on developing the curriculum planning across a range of subjects. It outlines what pupils need to learn from Nursery through to Year 2. The school has sought external guidance and expertise to plan the curriculum in detail. Leaders are thinking carefully about how the curriculum helps prepare pupils moving into Year 3. Staff receive training on teaching the curriculum and subject leaders receive time to plan and review the curriculum.

There have been longstanding issues related to staffing turnover and training in the Nursery. The school is working hard to address the issues. As a result, this has meant that the youngest children are not getting off to the best start possible. This is especially the case in pupils' development of speech, language and communication.

Staff know children well in the Reception classes. Children are settled, happy, learn important daily routines, and interact with each other in a kind and considered way. They access a good range of activities and resources to support their learning, including in the well-planned outdoor space.

In response to pupils' gaps in learning, the school is increasingly investing in pupils' communication and language across this curriculum this year. The school has embedded the use of high-quality books and invested in the new library. This focus is also being developed for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who access the school's 'nest' and 'cabin' programmes of support. Pupils are increasingly being supported by a more bespoke approach to their own approach to communication.

Adults are confident to deliver the school's chosen phonics programme. The school has invested in books, resources, interventions and additional reading time. Despite this work, a significant number of pupils are still not able to read as well as they should, especially, but not exclusively, those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school does not know precisely the difference that teachers' work is making to helping pupils to catch up.

Most staff use well-considered techniques to help pupils access and enjoy their learning. However, a small number of pupils exhibit more complex needs and behaviours. Leaders do not review all the information that they have about pupils' behaviour within school in order to see where they could be more effective.

Pupils are confident to talk about a range of things that they have learned about how to keep themselves safe. This includes 'stranger danger' and online safety. They also learn a range of other things, such as the importance of kindness and caring for others. Staff role model this approach for pupils in their daily interactions with them.

Most staff are very positive about working at the school. They value the support they receive from leaders and feel that leaders are considerate of their workload. Many staff have worked at the school for long periods of time. Most staff feel a strong commitment to the school community and pupils within it.

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 do not know how effective its work is over time, on a sustained basis. This is not helping to identify precise priorities for improvement or measure the impact of the school's work. The school needs to ensure that systems and processes give a precise insight into where it could be more effective in areas such as dealing with bullying, improving behaviour, reading catch up, and attendance. This is especially, but not exclusively, for pupils who arrive mid-year, and the effectiveness of support for disadvantaged pupils.
- Children in the Nursery over time have not got off to the strongest start, especially in their speech, language and communication. The school needs to secure ongoing sustained improvements in the provision, to ensure that the youngest children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are ready to move into Reception and beyond.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in September 2014.

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 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	114746
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10318579
Type of school	Infant and nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair of governing body	Louise O'Flaherty
Headteacher	Steven Turnbull
Website	www.hazelmere-inf.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers a breakfast club. This is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- The school was not making use of any alternative provision at the time of the inspection.
- The school serves a high proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a high proportion of pupils in receipt of an education, health and care plan and/or in receipt of the pupil premium.
- The headteacher was on a period of extended absence. The headteacher had been absent since January 2024 and was not on site during the inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- This is 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 this evaluation of the school.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in these subjects: early speech, language, communication and early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the subject with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to adults teaching and/or supporting pupils, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning. The inspector also heard a selection of pupils read with an adult.
- The inspector held discussions with leaders. Inspectors also spoke to a local authority officer and met with several members of the governing body, including the chair.
- 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.
- No pupils completed Ofsted's survey for them. To gather evidence about pupils' experiences, the inspector observed them at different times during the school day, spoke to them during free times, and met with groups of pupils.
- The inspector took account of 40 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including comments in the free-text facility.
- To gather the views of staff, the inspector took account of 33 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff and spoke to groups of staff during the inspection.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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