Hamstel Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	114770
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	378926
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Michelle Winter HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	467
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Wright
Headteacher	Angela Savill (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2011
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michelle Winter	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Bone	Additional inspector
Andrew Lyons	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Teaching and learning were seen in 16 lessons and 15 teachers were observed including three joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors listened to some pupils read and looked at a sample of their books. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, assessments and monitoring evidence. They considered responses to questionnaires returned by 141 parents and carers and those from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Hamstel is a larger than average junior school. Most pupils are of white British heritage. There is a small but growing proportion of pupils from a range of minority ethnic groups and a very small proportion in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also above average.

The school was given a notice to improve by Ofsted when it was inspected in February 2011. A monitoring visit in September 2011 found that the school was making satisfactory progress in addressing its areas for improvement and in raising standards. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	**3**

Achievement of pupils	**3**
Quality of teaching	**3**
Behaviour and safety of pupils	**3**
Leadership and management	**3**

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It has successfully addressed key weaknesses identified in the last inspection. It is not yet good because some teaching is not securing consistently good progress for pupils, particularly in writing. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

- The school's concerted efforts to improve teaching and learning have secured better progress for pupils. Attainment in mathematics is now average. Attainment in reading and writing is improving quickly and pupils are on track to reach standards which are closer to average. Pupils' handwriting and presentation skills are inconsistently developed.

- Teaching is satisfactory overall and improving. There is now more good teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6, which is securing accelerated progress for pupils. In some lessons pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work independently. Occasionally the purpose of learning is not made clear enough. Marking usually provides helpful feedback, however this is not the case in all classes.

- Pupils usually behave well in lessons. Behaviour in the playgrounds is positive. Sometimes in weaker lessons pupils are not fully engaged in their learning and their attention wanders. A minority of parents and carers express concern that behaviour is not managed well enough.

- Leadership is now more effective, particularly in improving the quality of teaching. Some leaders are new to their role and are just beginning to have an impact in improving systems to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language.

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Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted strongly through the curriculum, teaching and the positive relationships between adults and pupils. Parents and carers are now receiving better information. The school is appropriately exploring ways to develop further links with parents and carers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all of it secures good progress by:
  - ensuring that all lessons provide pupils with good opportunities to work independently
  - ensuring that pupils understand the purpose for their learning in all lessons
  - ensuring that marking and feedback to pupils is consistently helpful.
- Improve the quality of pupils' written work through a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting and clear expectations of the presentation of work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - continuing to develop systems to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language
  - exploring ways to engage parents and carers more in the work of the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory. Attainment has been broadly low over time and the most recent Year 6 assessment results show that attainment, particularly in writing, remained low. Last year too few pupils made the expected progress from their starting points in reading and writing, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The school's own data and evidence from lessons and pupils' books indicate that progress overall has improved quickly since the last inspection. Pupils, particularly in Year 6, are making accelerated progress. In other year groups pupils are making at least satisfactory progress from their starting points. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported in lessons, in small groups and through individual teaching and are making better progress so that gaps in achievement are closing. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are now making satisfactory progress overall. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress.

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The progress of all pupils is tracked carefully and where individuals are in danger of falling behind they are quickly identified and additional help is provided to help them catch up. Individual support has been effective in addressing gaps in learning in reading and writing.

Boys and girls are equally keen to write and their knowledge of language and writing for different purposes is developing well. In one lesson exploring the work of Shakespeare, for example, pupils were enthusiastically using Tudor language to create a sonnet. Pupils' handwriting and presentation skills, however, are under-developed and this sometimes detracts from the content of their work. The school is developing a growing culture of reading through opportunities to share books in whole class sessions and regular use of the well-stocked library. Some younger pupils lack the secure knowledge of the sounds letters make. The school is addressing this through a more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 is below average, although this represents satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Pupils' skills in mathematics have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are able to demonstrate their growing understanding of number in a variety of contexts. as a result of more consistently effective teaching, teachers' secure subject knowledge and activities that meet learners needs more precisely.

Pupils are making good progress in developing information, communication and technology skills (ICT) when working in the ICT suite. Pupils enjoy art and have produced some high quality pieces of work including, for example, pastel representations of the Northern Lights.

Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel their children are taught well. Inspectors found that teaching is satisfactory overall and improving, with much that is now good. There is a consistent approach to the planning of lessons. Teachers use accurate assessment information to plan activities which usually meet learners' needs well. In the best lessons, precise and enthusiastic teaching maintains the pace of learning and pupils are actively engaged. Questioning is well-targeted and helps teachers judge pupils' understanding of lesson content and how lessons need to be adapted to meet emerging needs. Typically, one history lesson provided good cross-curricular opportunities for writing. Pupils were encouraged to compare the cultural aspects of the Tudor Court to their own culture and experience. Good use was made of individual laptops to encourage writing, particularly that of boys, and to support pupils with special needs. Teachers usually make clear to pupils how they will know they have achieved the lesson aims, with good use of success criteria. Older pupils in particular use these well to helpfully guide their work. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to learning particularly for disabled pupils and those with special needs or behaviour difficulties through their well-targeted support in lessons and small groups. The daily teaching of reading in whole class sessions is securing

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better progress and here too learning support assistants help some pupils to catch up when they read with them individually.

In lessons judged satisfactory overall pupils sometimes spend too long listening to their teachers and do not have enough opportunities to complete independent activities. Additionally, some lessons do not make clear the context for learning so that pupils are not motivated as well as they could be and the pace of learning is not brisk enough. Marking usually provides helpful feedback and useful next steps in learning but this is done more effectively in some classes than others. Sometimes marking does not target the specific points that will lead to improvement particularly in writing. Pupils do not have enough regular opportunities in all classes to respond to teachers' marking because they are not given the time to correct their own work or show examples of improvement.

Classrooms are positive and stimulating learning environments and teachers provide opportunities for pupils to reflect and cooperate. Spirituality is promoted well, including through themed assemblies.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are extremely polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. They enjoy school and consequently attendance is high. The school is a well-ordered environment and most pupils cooperate well so that major disruption to lessons is uncommon. Most pupils behave appropriately in school and respond well to teachers' direction and guidance for good behaviour. The number of incidents of poor behaviour is reducing as a result of clearer expectations. A minority of parents and carers feel that the school does not manage poor behaviour well enough so that lessons are disrupted. There remain a minority of pupils with challenging behaviour and the school is supporting them appropriately and disruption to lessons is uncommon; the learning mentor and school counsellor also make a positive contribution to their improving behaviour. Inspectors found that although behaviour is usually good, occasionally when pupils are not fully engaged because activities are not well-matched to their needs, behaviour is not conducive to good learning.

Most pupils feel that the school keeps them safe and the majority of parents and carers agree. Pupils have a good understanding of potentially unsafe situations including when using the internet. Pupils have a sound awareness of different forms of bullying. They are confident that the school deals appropriately with the rare incidents of bullying.

Leadership and management

School leaders are clearly articulating greater ambition and higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school has been through a challenging period in its history but staff morale is high and all staff are keen to improve matters. Leaders set ambitious targets for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has addressed

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inadequate teaching appropriately. Teachers are held to account for pupils' progress through regular review meetings. They are aware of what is expected in lessons to achieve good teaching and learning, with a clear focus on improving pupils' progress. The accuracy of the headteacher's evaluations of the quality of teaching was confirmed through joint observations during the inspection. Monitoring of teaching and learning is regular and rigorous; feedback to teachers includes helpful comments to support further improvement linked to performance management and professional development training. The school now has sufficient examples of good teaching to share. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has focused its efforts appropriately on addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. In all areas progress is evident.

The wider leadership of the school has become more effective. Year group leaders are empowered to to make a difference. Some leaders are new to post and are developing their roles. Systems for supporting disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils who speak English as an additional language are not fully developed, for instance individual learning plans for these pupils sometimes lack the appropriate detail to ensure consistency of approach. The school satisfactorily promotes equality and tackles discrimination. Bi-lingual library provision promotes equality of access for pupils who are new to English.

The governing body has become more effective and it now receives detailed progress information from a range of sources. It monitors the school's progress diligently and is asking more challenging questions. The governing body has worked with the local authority to secure the leadership of the school for the next academic year. Systems for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Important checks for staff and volunteers are carried out and recorded diligently. Recent changes to school procedures have ensured that the school site is safe and secure.

Engagement with parents and carers is developing. Most parents and carers are supportive of the school. Leaders are keen to further develop parental links by providing more workshops for parents and carers so that they can support their children at home. Leaders are also looking for ways to gain parents and carers' views more frequently.

There is an appropriately broad curriculum and a diverse range of popular extra-curricular activities. As a result of planned activities in the curriculum, including in religious education, pupils have a broadening knowledge of other cultures. Pupils have an understating of democracy through elections to various positions of responsibility including school councillors, mentors and house captains. Opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are embedded in the curriculum.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**Outstanding**	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Inadequate**
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

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27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamstel Junior School, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 4PQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when I visited your school recently with my colleagues. Thank you also for talking to us about your work and the things you enjoy. We know that adults take good care of you. Many of you told us that you enjoy school. Your attendance is high.

You go to a satisfactory school. We can see that your school is improving but it still has further to go in making sure that all of you make as much progress as you can. Overall you are making satisfactory progress.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to improve the school further by:

- making sure that all lessons give you good opportunities to work independently
- making sure that you understand the purpose of your learning in all lessons
- making sure that teachers tell you clearly how to improve when they mark your work and give you more opportunities to correct and improve your work
- helping you to improve your handwriting and the presentation of your work
- improving the school's systems to support those of you with special educational needs and those of you who are learning English as an additional language
- helping your parents and carers to get more involved in the work of the school.

I hope you will play your part by continuing to work hard and do your best.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector

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