

Brightlingsea Infant School

Eastern Road, Brightlingsea, Colchester, CO7 0HU

Inspection dates 2–3 May 2013

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Outstanding leadership and management and the staff's shared ambition for providing pupils with high-quality learning experiences are the keys to the school's success.
- The headteacher's uncompromising and relentless drive has ensured that teaching and pupils' achievement have improved considerably since the last inspection. Senior leaders, including the deputy headteachers, are consolidating their roles in leading particular areas of improvement.
- Teaching is outstanding. Lessons are highly motivating because teachers ask pupils what they would like to learn and include pupils' ideas in their planning.
- Within the outstanding educational experiences teachers plan, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school has plans to extend its provision further to provide more first-hand experiences for pupils to learn about cultures other than their own.
- The school's 'Kids Club' provides excellent before- and after-school care and holiday activities.
- Pupils make rapid and sustained progress. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment is at a much higher level than that found nationally. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
- A key feature in pupils' progress is that all staff listen to them and respect their ideas. As a result, pupils have an outstanding ability to explain how well they are doing and what they think they would like to learn next.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Enthusiasm and perseverance are key features of pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and very well-developed skills in reading, writing and mathematics prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education.
- Parents and carers are effusive in their praise for school's 'open door' policy. They are totally confident that they will be listened to if they have any concerns. All parents and carers who voiced their views say their child is happy and safe in school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, as well as groups of pupils or individuals working with teaching assistants. The inspectors looked in on pupils during lunchtime and visited break times.
- The inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in all year groups. They shared books with and heard some pupils from all year groups read.
- The inspectors held meetings with staff, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, groups of pupils from Year 2 and the school council. They spoke informally with many pupils during lessons and at break times.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked carefully at safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress, self-evaluation documents and development plans.
- The lead inspector visited the 'Kids Club' provision, talked to staff and pupils who attend. They looked at pupils' work and records of their trips and activities.
- The views of 42 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into consideration, as were the views of parents and carers who had written to inspectors and completed the school's own recent questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke to approximately 27 parents and carers either in classes at the start of the day or after a class assembly.

Inspection team

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|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Karin Heap | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a large-sized infant school which shares the site with Brightlingsea Junior School.
- There are three classes in each of Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Most of these pupils transfer to the neighbouring junior school but some transfer to special schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. This extra funding is for looked-after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- The school works in partnership with two school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) organisations. In most years, the school has two trainee teachers for a period of classroom experience.
- The headteacher is a recognised coach for the 'Achievement for All' project which is to help schools provide effectively for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The headteacher supports three schools.
- The school provides a 'Kids Club'. The club provides a range of out-of-school care.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extending further pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own by developing even more links with organisations so that pupils have opportunities to meet and learn from people of differing cultures.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been consistently high. In reading, writing and mathematics, a much higher than usual proportion of pupils attain levels that are above those expected for this age group.
- When children start in the Reception classes, their levels of attainment are a little lower than those typical of the age group. Additionally, there are a few children whose levels of attainment and personal development are considerably below those usually found.
- Excellent links between home and school help children to settle happily and quickly into school. Parents and carers are valued as co-educators of their children and provided with a good deal of information as to how they can reinforce learning at home. Consequently, parents contribute a good deal to the progress their children make.
- Pupils learn exceptionally well from their start in school. A key feature in the Reception classes is all staff's high expectations. They expect children to make choices and become independent thinkers. They support them very effectively in developing these skills by providing exceptionally well-planned tasks, asking questions and prompting children to think hard.
- In the Reception classes, attention to detail ensures that, from the start, children learn a correct pencil grip and to write individual letters appropriately. Phonics (using the sounds of letters to help with reading and writing) is taught and practised exceptionally well, with every opportunity taken to encourage children to write.
- Skills such as how to observe carefully, choose the right paintbrush and how to mix paint colours are taught expertly. As a result, standards of artwork are exceptionally high in Reception classes and throughout the school. All pupils take pride in their work.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make rapid progress, especially in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills. In a Year 2 science lesson, a good proportion of pupils demonstrated abilities in scientific enquiry above those expected for their age.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy talking about books they like and reading about favourite characters. Pupils who find reading difficult use their phonic skills very confidently for working out how to read unfamiliar words. These pupils read very regularly in school.
- The school's focus on ensuring pupils can write at length has been most successful. Older pupils plan their work, carefully considering the use of adjectives and adverbs. They write enthusiastically and at length. A high proportion of pupils demonstrate above-average levels of attainment.
- Pupils apply their mathematical skills to great effect in innovative ways, especially when learning outside. For example, Year 1 pupils worked out ways to demonstrate subtraction using toy cars; Year 2 pupils gave considerable thought as to how to conduct a fair test to see how much their seeds would grow under different conditions.
- Achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is outstanding. They usually do as well as their peers and, in some years, a little better. From extra funding allocated for this group of pupils, the school provides extra support such as a family support worker to help

families improve their child's attendance, and intense, individual teaching of literacy each day for 20 weeks.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress. The school works very effectively in partnership with a wide range of outside agencies who provide specialist equipment and expert advice which staff follow.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The headteacher's passionate belief that all pupils can learn well if the teaching is tailored to their needs is shared by all staff. The results are evident in all classes. Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress. Teachers make sure that the work pupils do and the support they have is matched to what they need to learn next and the way in which they learn best.
- Teaching is never less than consistently good, with much that is outstanding. Key features of teaching are the very effective deployment of highly proficient teaching assistants and the very high expectations all staff set for pupils to behave well and work hard.
- The strong focus on making sure that teaching assistants are thoroughly trained to teach phonics has been particularly beneficial. Depending on the stage they have reached in their learning, pupils are taught in small groups by teachers or teaching assistants. This arrangement ensures pupils' rapid progress in developing basic literacy skills.
- Throughout the school, there is a high level of respect between adults and pupils and pupils themselves. Staff listen to pupils. Pupils are encouraged to say what they would like to learn and how they would like to do this. Teachers plan accordingly. As a consequence, pupils are highly motivated and persevere for good lengths of time.
- All adults are skilled in asking precise questions to check on pupils' understanding and lead them to think about the next steps in their learning. Consequently, any misunderstandings are quickly put right and pupils are carefully guided to develop good levels of skills and competencies in a range of subjects.
- These highly effective questioning skills also enable adults to give pupils very regular feedback on how well they are doing and suggest ways of improving.
- In the Reception classes, teachers plan a range of exciting activities both in and out of the classrooms. Children's knowledge and interests are stimulated through the chances to engage with these activities. Every minute of the day is used to aid and enrich learning. Early literacy and mathematical skills are taught and practised exceptionally well so that children are very well equipped for their future learning.
- Exciting learning opportunities continue in Years 1 and 2. A strong feature in teaching is the planning of outdoor practical activities which reinforce and enhance pupils' learning. For example, Year 1 pupils decided to use a range of toy cars to make up subtraction stories. With staff providing just the right questioning to iron out misunderstandings, pupils quickly recalled that bringing the cars together was adding and moving some away was subtraction.
- Within a framework of excellent relationships, all staff manage pupils' behaviour extremely effectively. Staff are very well trained to help pupils who find it very difficult to manage their behaviour to develop strategies for doing so.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning. For their age, they demonstrate high levels of perseverance, especially when working outside. They choose materials thoughtfully and adapt them for specific purposes. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson, one pupil had collected materials ready to set up a hydroponics experiment. Pupils know that their efforts and ideas are valued by all staff. As a result, they are confident to voice their opinions and offer sensible suggestions about their work.
- Behaviour around the school is outstanding. As a result, the school is a very harmonious community. Pupils are polite and friendly to those they know and are welcoming to visitors. Dinner times are very social occasions which pupils enjoy, although many say they would like bigger dinners!
- For their age, pupils develop strong values and a high level of respect for others. They have a well-developed sense of empathy. They are well aware that some of their classmates have particular needs and that they need to learn differently. They are kind and patient, for example, using a special way of communicating with their friends through pictures.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and their many accomplishments, especially their artwork. Pupils of all ages have a leadership role in the school, such as class councillors or school councillors. They take these responsibilities seriously. All pupils have a strong voice in decisions relating to their learning.
- Older pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are very confident that, should they have any concerns, any adult will help them.
- Attendance is broadly average. Rates of persistent absence are much lower than found in similar schools.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has maintained her pursuit of excellence. High levels of achievement and pupils' personal development have been sustained. The headteacher has driven improvement relentlessly; pupils' attainment has risen further and the range of learning experiences has improved considerably.
- All staff share a strong commitment to making sure that all groups of pupils have an equal chance to do well and there is no discrimination.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas where they think they can improve further. Senior leaders are beginning to develop their roles in terms of taking the lead responsibility for improvement projects.
- Attention to detail, high-quality professional development opportunities and excellent management systems are at the heart of the school's success. The school tracks the progress of individual pupils rigorously. Senior leaders and teachers know exactly how well individuals and different groups of pupils are learning.
- The headteacher holds teachers to account for the progress their pupils make. Senior leaders

provide excellent role models in their own teaching and support teachers at the early stages of their careers and experienced staff very effectively. Consequently, all staff are confident, open to new ideas to improve the school's provision and work highly effectively as a team.

- The innovative range of learning experiences is a strength. Teachers' planning carefully weaves together pupils' interests and the development of essential skills. As a result, learning is exciting and pupils practise and develop skills in meaningful activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well. Older pupils talk knowledgeably about the main celebrations of cultures other than their own. The school has plans to develop more opportunities for pupils to have first-hand experiences such as talking with more people of differing cultures.
- The headteacher and governing body value parents as co-educators of their children. Parents and carers who voiced their views to inspectors had extremely positive views, especially about the school's 'open door' policy. All 42 responses from parents and carers on Parent View agreed that they would recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- The headteacher and governing body share a strong commitment to the community and, to that end, provide the excellent 'Kids Club' and the opportunity for parents and carers to stay at the end of the school day to socialise while their children play in the school's grounds.
- The school chooses to buy in support from the local authority and values the challenge it provides.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are thorough in making sure that they perform their legal duties, including the safe recruiting and vetting of staff. They ensure that all requirements for pupils' safeguarding are fully met. Governors make good use of their individual professional expertise in supporting the school and asking searching questions. They visit frequently and consult with parents and carers regularly. They have a good understanding of what performance information tells them about pupils' progress compared with schools nationally. There is no complacency. They are well aware of the quality of teaching and the strategies used for helping teachers to make further improvement, such as linking pay closely to pupils' achievement, how the school rewards good teaching and leadership and deals with any underperformance. Governors check on spending decisions carefully, including the use and impact of pupil premium funding.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114755 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 412676 |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 244 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sandra Langohr |
| Headteacher | Julia Hunt |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 May 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01206 302719 |
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