

North Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114709
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	300341
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jan Blackwell
Headteacher	Mr Alan Garnett
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 1999
School address	John Harper Street Colchester Essex CO1 1RP
Telephone number	01206 574225
Fax number	01206 369583

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school serving the local community which is expanding due to major housing development. As a consequence, the number of pupils joining and, to a lesser extent, leaving the school is higher than average. Attainment on entry is average overall but within this judgement there are significant numbers of low and high attaining children. The great majority of pupils are White British with small numbers coming from several minority ethnic groups. There is an average proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language, 19 of whom are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have learning difficulties or disabilities are below average although the number of pupils with significant levels of need is above that usually found. The school has a National Healthy Schools Advanced Award and Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and sound value for money. Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school and demonstrate this with their good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning. Their attendance is good. They attain average standards in national tests and, in the main, achieve satisfactorily. There are a few of the more able pupils who do not do as well as they should and, across the school, there remains some underachievement in writing which the school is tackling successfully. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress because of the well targeted support they receive. Standards in the Nursery and Reception classes are average and the provision is satisfactory. Strengths of the school are in the good care, support and guidance it provides which results in the good personal development of its pupils. These strengths are mainly the result of the headteacher's strong commitment to linking with other schools and organisations to seek high quality visits and visitors to promote pupils' enthusiasm for learning, their fitness and their personal qualities. These links also contribute well to the sound curriculum which has its strength in helping pupils develop their good understanding of how to be a responsible member of a community and keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. The school is not exploiting links between subjects to give pupils more opportunities to practise using their writing skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used exceptionally well in a wide range of subjects so that pupils make good progress and attain above average standards in ICT. Their good social awareness, high standards in ICT, together with their satisfactory progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills prepare them satisfactorily for their future.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good and successful leadership for pupils' personal development and enjoyment of their education. Links with parents are good and the great majority have good things to say about the school. Parents mentioned, 'the friendly community atmosphere' and, 'the sense of family between the staff and pupils is wonderful'. The headteacher and senior team have a satisfactory overview of the school's strengths and the areas to improve but the processes for monitoring teaching, learning and pupils' progress are not applied rigorously or regularly enough to bring about improvement at a good rate. School development planning lacks a clear and easily measurable focus on raising standards. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection with the recently introduced 'raising attainment plans' for writing having a good impact on standards although there is still some way to go. Teaching and learning are sound and underpinned with excellent relationships. Pupils say they like their teachers. Many of the teaching team demonstrate good aspects to their teaching. The main reason that their teaching is not resulting in better than satisfactory progress is because their work is not being monitored rigorously enough to help them refine their assessment and planning and set higher expectations for progress. Teachers are not expecting high enough standards for handwriting and presentation in Years 5 and 6.

The school views itself as good but the inspectors disagree. There are, indeed, some good and innovative features in the school's work but the quality of leadership and management, teaching and pupils' progress need to improve further to warrant the judgement of 'good'. The capacity to improve is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards, especially for more able pupils, by making better use of the tracking system to set challenging targets and checking rigorously and regularly that pupils are meeting these.
- Improve school development planning so that there are robust and measurable targets for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching to a consistently good level by regular and rigorous monitoring.
- Improve standards of handwriting and presentation, especially in Years 5 and 6.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are within the average range but closer to national averages at Year 6 than in Year 2 where standards in writing were exceptionally low in 2006. Across the school, standards in writing are not yet good enough but are showing reasonable improvement this year as a result of 'raising attainment plans' put in place with advice from the local authority. The great majority of pupils, including those in Nursery and Reception, make adequate progress and achieve satisfactorily. The main reason why some, mainly more able pupils do not make enough progress is that the headteacher and senior team are not using data and the progress tracking system effectively to set challenging targets and checking to see that pupils meet them. Good management by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCo) and proficient help from learning support assistants play an important part in the good progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils have the right level of work to ensure they succeed and have good self-esteem. The excellent pastoral support for newly-arriving families with little or no English helps children to settle in quickly and make good, and often very good, progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and well managed by all adults. Older pupils in the school are polite and thoughtful young people who take seriously responsibilities, such as being a play leader. Attitudes to work are positive particularly in ICT where pupils persevere with challenging tasks.

Pupils have a good understanding of safety issues and of how to lead healthy life styles. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and that incidents of bullying are always resolved, sometimes by themselves. The school council contributes significantly to the life and work of the school as well as helping others who are less fortunate. They are rightly proud of their fundraising to buy a classroom in a developing country. Links with the local community are good and include contributing to consultations about traffic in High Street and performing in the annual town carol concert.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school. There are several good aspects to teaching especially in the relationships and management of pupils and the teaching of ICT where the very competent technician/instructor has a beneficial impact on pupils' standards and staff's expertise. Individual teachers have recognised expertise in areas such as mathematics, ICT and music and provide skilled support for colleagues. The reason that the good aspects to teaching are not having more impact on pupils' progress is that teaching and learning are not monitored rigorously and there is not an informed, focused drive from the headteacher and senior team to help teachers ensure pupils make better than satisfactory progress. Assessment is satisfactory overall but good for pupils at an early stage of learning English and for pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. An excellent example of helpful marking was noted but this is not yet consistent across the school. In Years 5 and 6, teachers are not expecting enough of their pupils in terms of handwriting and presentation of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched by a good range of visits and visitors to the school. Although there is satisfactory emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their basic literacy skills across all subjects. The headteacher's recent initiative of 'instruments for all' contributes very well to pupils' enjoyment and achievement in music. ICT is planned and used across other subjects to good effect. Involvement in the Intelligent Citizen Project has a good impact on helping pupils understand their roles and responsibilities within a diverse, multi-cultural community. A good range of out of school activities is well attended and enables pupils to extend their sporting and musical interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Every child matters at North and each receives very good pastoral support. This support is particularly successful for the high number of pupils joining the school during the school year and for those who have English as an additional language. Parents of these pupils speak highly of the staff's kindness and the welcoming school community. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils comply with the latest government requirements.

Links with other schools and outside agencies are beneficial, for example, gifted mathematicians in the older classes have opportunities to extend their knowledge by attending the local grammar school for a course of lessons. The academic guidance provided is satisfactory but the system for tracking pupils' progress and setting challenging targets is not used well enough to promote faster learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership for pupils' care and well-being and their personal development. His introduction of innovative schemes such as 'instruments for all' and involvement in projects such as Art Reflecting Citizenship have a very positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and social skills. The headteacher and senior team have a satisfactory overview of what goes on in the school but lack a precise understanding of standards and pupils' progress because monitoring of teaching, the pupil progress tracking system and the use of data are not rigorous and regular enough. Consequently, school development planning lacks a specific section for explicit and measurable targets for raising pupils' attainment and increasing their progress. Governors ensure the school meets its statutory responsibilities and are very committed to supporting the school. They are not challenging the school to do better in its standards and pupils' achievement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of North Primary and Nursery School, Colchester, CO1 1RP

Thank you for your warm welcome to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and were pleased that you were happy to share your ideas and views about your school with us. This letter is to tell you what we think of your school and how it can be even better.

You like coming to school. Everyone looks after you well and you feel safe and know that someone will always help you if you are worried. We were very impressed with the achievements of the school council and thought that Year 5 and 6 were very kind and responsible young people. You like your teachers and we thought the teaching was satisfactory and you behave well in lessons and at playtime. Most of you make satisfactory progress in your learning but we think some of you could do even better especially in writing. In Years 5 and 6 handwriting and presentation are not as good as they should be. We think your teachers could give some of you more help so that you can keep your books tidy and really neat.

We think your headteacher and governors are doing a satisfactory job running your school but we have asked them to do four things.

- Check carefully on your progress to make sure you do as well as possible.
- Check on the teaching so that teachers can help you to make good progress.
- Make sure there are challenging targets for your progress in their school improvement plans.
- Make sure that you improve your handwriting and presentation.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at North and wish the school council continued success with their fund raising.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead Inspector