

Quilters Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114884
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326081
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	179
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Perkins
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Luckman
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Laindon Road Billericay Essex CM12 9LD
Telephone number	01277 624773
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school is popular and over-subscribed. There are slightly more boys in the school than girls. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. The number speaking English as an additional language is below average as is the proportion changing school other than at the usual time. There is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school holds Healthy Schools, Activemark, Eco School and Basic Skills awards. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are educated in the two Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents speak with pleasure about how much their children enjoy their time here and how well they are cared for. The personal development of the pupils is excellent as is the curriculum. There are real strengths in the way staff enrich learning through an outstanding range of extra activities that bring education to life. Most pupils really enjoy school and are particularly enthusiastic about making friends and swimming. The Healthy Schools task group promotes healthy eating and exercise. Most pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe including at playtime. The roles and responsibilities they take on help many make a positive contribution to the school and wider community.

Children often enter the school with skills that are above those expected for their age. Even so they make good progress in the EYFS and Key Stage 1, especially in reading and mathematics. When they leave school standards are at least above average and sometimes well above, which helps prepare them well for their future. However, standards are not as high as at the time of the previous inspection, when attainment was exceptional. While standards are still above national averages, they are not as high in writing as they are in reading and mathematics, where not as many of the most able pupils achieve the higher levels. The school recognises many of the reasons for the dips including the lower level of skills that these pupils had on entry and a growing number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, coupled with several staff changes. Data and inspection findings show that the majority of pupils make good progress whilst they are at the school and while many do very well the achievement of the majority is good rather than outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Because behaviour is good, lessons proceed in a calm and orderly manner. Staff work closely with well-briefed teaching assistants, who provide very effective additional help for identified groups. The care, guidance and support of the pupils is good overall. Pastoral care is excellent because staff, including those in support roles, know the pupils very well and meet their individual needs successfully. Academic guidance is good but target- setting lacks clarity and the marking of pupils' work is not always used to best effect to meet pupils' needs, especially in writing.

Leadership and management are good overall, as is the capacity for further improvement. The enthusiastic headteacher provides a strong and effective steer to school improvement. Governance is excellent and ensures governors are well briefed, which enables them to act as a critical friend and support strategic decision making very effectively. However, the self-evaluation resulting from the monitoring of the work of the school by senior staff is somewhat generous. Inspection judgements are below most areas of the school's self-evaluation. This is because activities lack evaluative rigour in the use of data and in identifying the exact quality of provision and what else needs to be improved.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good overall and it is well led and managed. The personal development and well-being of the children is excellent. Children enter the school as full time pupils at three times in the year depending on their date of birth. Even so, they make good progress and most exceed the expected levels by the end of the Reception year. There is a very effective induction programme enabling children to settle quickly. Staff work closely with parents who speak with

great warmth about how much the children enjoy their first days in school. On entry the overall knowledge and understanding of the children is above average. Their personal and social skills are often high with many being happy, confident and eager to learn. They make good progress overall and for several this is very good. Classrooms are bright and stimulating learning environments where there are well-resourced role-play areas that promote imagination, communication and social development well. Teaching and learning are good with some strong elements. There is a range of interesting practical activities where children learn by finding things out, which develops their self-confidence very effectively. However, at times staff miss opportunities to take learning further by extending activities and challenging the children even more.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by ensuring that all pupils and particularly the more able have further opportunities to write in depth.
- Ensure that the monitoring of the work of the school is rigorously evaluative, takes full account of data and identifies areas for further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Currently, pupils entering Year 1 have skills, knowledge and understanding that is often above the expectations for their age. Most speak with a well-developed vocabulary and are able to explain their thoughts and ideas well. This coupled with a good early awareness of numbers and effective knowledge and understanding of the world equips them well for their experiences in Years 1 and 2. At the age of seven, standards are at least above, and sometimes well above, national averages.

Most pupils read well. They enjoy a good range of reading materials and are well supported in their reading at home. Most have a good understanding of numbers and benefit from a well-planned range of problem solving activities. While the majority make good overall progress in reading and mathematics not as many pupils attain the higher levels in writing, particularly boys. The school has recognised this and introduced more phonic work to give a stronger basis to writing, but as yet descriptive writing is not at such a high level. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and the small number speaking English as an additional language, make good overall progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and the wide range of opportunities it presents. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils develop a great sense of responsibility towards the school and each other through their role as monitors or members of the school council. They also have a very good understanding of their responsibility to the global environment. This is promoted both through the Green Team and, in their wider understanding of the need for recycling, through the Arts Week. They understand the need to work cooperatively in lessons. They have a very good understanding of the need for healthy eating, although this is not always reflected as well in their packed lunches as it is in the school's own catering. They also enjoy the very good opportunities for physical activity, including swimming. They are very aware of the need for safety especially on the Internet, and this is reinforced by a home-school contract. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and

pupils have a good understanding of the sanctions that apply when it is not. Attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is effective and enables pupils to learn well. Staff have good working relationships with the pupils, who are eager to find things out. The management of pupils is good and teachers explain things clearly so that most know what they have to do. With several recent staffing changes and temporary arrangements during illness, the good team-working ethos of a united staff serves the school well. Staff ask a good range of questions to check understanding but occasionally miss the opportunity for pupils to discuss their ideas or use key vocabulary in order to improve their writing. At times, with noise intruding from open areas, staff have to work hard to maintain pupils' concentration. The sample of recent work indicates fewer opportunities to encourage the imagination or writing in depth than is often seen. The planning of lessons is extremely detailed and identifies several aspects including the activities, what the pupils are to learn, how they will recognise their success, how the level of challenge is to be varied for different groups and the support to be provided.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a broad and varied curriculum, which meets the needs of all pupils very well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Very good links are made between subjects where it is appropriate, as for instance in an English lesson when pupils were planning their own stories based on the setting of the Hindu story of Rama and Sita. The curriculum is enriched greatly by a wide range of clubs and out of school activities, including music and dance festivals and competitive sports. A series of 'Hooks and highlights' is identified for each year group. These are opportunities for visits to places of interest, such as Colchester Zoo, and visitors to the school, for instance to demonstrate Sikh wedding practices, which add greater interest and insight to the curriculum. There are also annual curriculum weeks, during which a topic such as art is focused on in greater depth. Pupils speak highly of the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and there is very good provision for their personal development through the programme of personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school meets all the legal requirements for safeguarding everyone. Child protection procedures are fully in place and thorough risk assessments are carried out on activities both within and outside school. Teachers and classroom assistants know pupils very well and are fully committed to their well-being. The outstanding links with a range of outside agencies help provide excellent pastoral care, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is good support for all levels of ability in class, and at lunchtime by mid-day assistants, both in the dining hall and the playground. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know that there is always somebody they can turn to if they are in difficulty. The school promotes good attendance and discourages families taking holidays during term. Teachers track academic progress as pupils move through the school. However, this information is not

yet used to set individual targets, which enable them to know what are the next steps they should take to improve their understanding. Teachers' marking is variable and does not always indicate how pupils can do better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Parents have very high regard for how the headteacher leads and manages the staff team. They rightly note her passion for the school and dedication to continually seeking improvement. Staff in other senior positions support the school well although with recent changes some roles are in an interim phase. Staff have worked extremely hard in recent years to try to ensure they have maintained the quality of education seen at the previous inspection. However, in some areas the outcomes of the senior leaders' monitoring of the work of the school is too generous and lacks sufficient evaluative rigour. For instance, the school believes it still provides an outstanding education in all areas, which does not sufficiently reflect the dip in standards.

Equality of opportunity is promoted very well. Staff and governors work hard to ensure the school is an integral part of the local and the wider community and helps unite the different groups in the area. There is a very effective strategy for developing community cohesion and pupils' awareness of these issues is excellent given their ages. Parents rightly note the administration team are welcoming and efficient. Governance is excellent. The governors have extensive links with the school including a detailed evaluation of the Every Child Matters agenda where recent visits have sought evidence to identify what is provided in each area.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Quilters Infant School, Billericay CM12 9LD

Thank you very much for looking after Mr Sangster and me when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed speaking to several of you and meeting you in lessons, at lunchtime, in assembly and during the discussion with the school council. Yours is a good school.

These are some of the best things we found.

- The curriculum is excellent and there are some really interesting things to find out about and do.
- Staff look after you very well and make sure you are safe and happy.
- You enjoy school, which makes your parents very happy and enthusiastic about Quilters Infants.
- There are lots of opportunities for you to take on responsibilities and work with others in the school and local community.
- The governors and other people who help the school do this really well which helps to make sure the school will continue to improve.

To help things to improve even more we have asked that:

- teachers provide more opportunities for you to develop your writing in greater depth.
- the staff check what happens even more carefully to make sure they know exactly what progress you are making and what else needs to be improved.

To help your school continue to improve, please make sure you carry on working hard and try to persuade your parents to help you eat healthily!

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector