

# Highfield Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131421
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	381339
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Denise Shields

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Joanne Pinnington
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicola Dowling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Blacon Point Road Blacon Chester CH1 5LD
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Denise Shields

Bimla Kumari

Additional inspector

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed nine teachers teaching 14 lessons or part-lessons. The inspectors listened to pupils from a range of different ages and abilities read. Meetings were held with four groups of pupils, three members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's strategic development plan, safeguarding documentation, and minutes of the governing body meetings. Also, they analysed 88 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to aid the planning of the inspection.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. An above average proportion of pupils is assessed as having special educational needs and with disabilities, whilst the proportion that has a statement of special educational needs is average. The school meets the current floor standard, whereby the government sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staff at all levels, including a 12-month period when the school was led by an acting headteacher and two acting assistant headteachers. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and deputy headteacher in September 2011.

The school holds Healthy School status and has achieved a number of awards, including the Inclusion Quality Mark, Sportsmark and Artsmark Silver.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

### Key Findings

- This is a good school. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are effective. They have a clear understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and ensure that the correct priorities for improvement are relentlessly pursued. Leaders have forged strong partnerships with other local schools and with external agencies; these help to raise pupils’ aspirations, self-esteem, confidence and improve the quality of their learning.
- Children have a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and there is a rising trend in their attainment by the end of the Reception Year.
- Taking account of pupils’ typically well below average starting points on entry to nursery, achievement for all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with disabilities, including those who have more complex needs, is good. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average overall by the end of Year 6.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because these basic skills are taught well in all classes. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise and extend their reading and speaking skills, and sometimes writing tasks for the more-able pupils are not always sufficiently demanding. Consequently, progress in these areas is not as always as strong as it is in mathematics.
- Almost all teaching is good, with examples of outstanding practice. Teachers carefully plan lessons that meet the needs and abilities of pupils. They often use well-chosen resources to ensure that learning is made fun. The rich curriculum adds depth and interest to pupils’ learning and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Overwhelmingly, pupils say they feel safe in the school; a view endorsed by almost all parents and carers. Behaviour is good, relationships are strong and pupils are polite and courteous towards each other and adults. Pupils, parents and carers are confident that any rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in speaking, reading and writing by ensuring that:
  - there is a greater depth of challenge in the writing tasks given to more-able pupils
  - pupils have more chances to improve their speaking skills and to respond to probing questions
  - more frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to read
  - teachers always provide enough time for pupils to consolidate their learning independently and in groups
  - marking in writing consistently matches the quality of the best practice.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, guidance and support are tailored well to individual needs. As a result, children eagerly join in activities, learn to share and take turns and enjoy their learning. Children make good progress across all areas of learning and achieve well. From below average levels of attainment on entry to Year 1, most pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average.

In all classes, there is a successful focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to extend their speaking skills, in a wider range of situations, to enable them to make greater progress. Both boys and girls say the school has a good range of books that capture their individual interests and fosters their enjoyment of reading. Basic reading strategies and skills are taught well and groups of pupils have regular daily opportunities to read to an adult. However, pupils do not always have sufficient chances to practise and improve their reading, to enable them to make faster progress. Pupils' attainment in reading by Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average.

Pupils enjoy learning, especially when activities are practical. Most try their best at all times and concentrate well. Many develop good cooperation skills. The exciting curriculum provides many chances for pupils to solve mathematical problems in a range of contexts and use their writing skills beyond their literacy lessons. In discussions, many pupils comment that this helps them learn a lot in their lessons. Although the more-able pupils are given writing tasks that are more difficult than those of their peers, these do not always have sufficient depth and challenge to enable pupils to progress to the higher level. This is confirmed by pupils who say that occasionally their writing activities are too easy.

When given the opportunity, almost all pupils work well with a partner or in groups; this is helping them to become confident and independent learners. This was apparent when the oldest pupils worked with their 'buddy' from the Reception class. They had devised simple games to teach the youngest children how to count in French. Everyone worked together well; relationships were supportive and enabled

the Reception class children to gain basic French vocabulary. Pupils' collaboration and their mutual enjoyment of learning were clearly evident and sustained through the session.

Almost all parents and carers express the view that their children make good progress and the school meets their child's particular needs. Effective targeted support in reading and writing, for pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities, including those who have more complex needs, enables some of these pupils to make huge leaps in their learning and their progress improves dramatically. Overall these pupils make the same good progress as that of other groups in the school. By the end of Year 6, successful school strategies have closed the gap between the attainment of boys and girls and, the gap in the performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has narrowed considerably compared to similar pupils nationally.

### **Quality of teaching**

Overwhelmingly, parents and carers express the view that their children are taught well. Inspectors endorse these positive views. The quality of most teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding practice. In all classes, relationships are strong and adults use praise well to build pupils' confidence and esteem. Teachers encourage pupils to work cooperatively and to listen carefully to the views of their peers. Teaching assistants guide the learning of individuals and small groups sensitively and effectively; this enables them to make good progress. In discussions, pupils with special educational needs and those with disabilities, including those who have more complex needs, comment that they value the support they receive from the adults who help them. In all classes, basic reading, writing and mathematical skills are taught well, including letters and sounds for the youngest pupils. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' overall good progress by the end of Year 6.

In the best lessons, teachers use imaginative or visual resources to totally capture pupils' attention and there is a real 'buzz' in the classroom because learning is often rapid. Teachers plan many opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups, or to ask and answer rapid 'quick-fire' questions of each other; this successfully promotes speaking, listening and cooperation.

In many good lessons, skilful questioning engages pupils' interest and extends their knowledge and skills quickly. This was evident in one lesson, where pupils were learning how to split quadrilaterals. The teacher's use of visual diagrams and clear explanations were then consolidated by effective well-targeted questioning. This built pupils' understanding and knowledge well. Good use is often made of new technology, such as, digital cameras or i-pads. These opportunities engage pupils, add a new dimension to their learning and as a result, their learning and progress is good. In satisfactory as opposed to good lessons, teachers sometimes talk for too long; this limits the time that pupils have to engage in individual and group work and consolidate their learning. Occasionally, teachers' questioning does not sufficiently probe and extend pupils' skills.

Teachers make regular and accurate assessment of pupils' progress. This information is used carefully to plan work to meet the needs and abilities of all groups, although

writing tasks do not consistently stretch more-able pupils. Pupils comment that discussions with their teachers and their learning targets help them to understand how to improve their work. Pupils' work is marked regularly. In most instances, teachers provide constructive comments to help pupils improve, but this is sometimes less helpful in enhancing the quality of pupils' writing.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Almost all pupils help and encourage each other. They understand and accept the need for rules and enjoy the praise they receive from their teachers and other adults. As a consequence, their behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and during playtime. In discussions with different groups of pupils, they indicate that behaviour over time is almost always good. They are confident that any occasional misbehaviour is managed very effectively and so their progress in lessons is not disrupted. The school uses the expertise of a range of external agencies to provide good support for a very few pupils experiencing difficulties that affect their behaviour. This has led to striking improvements in both their self-confidence and behaviour. Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous; they readily hold doors open for their peers and adults and when thanked, frequently respond 'you're very welcome'. Parents and carers and members of staff say that behaviour is good and any unacceptable behaviour is managed effectively.

In discussions and in the response to the pupils' questionnaire, almost all express the view that they feel safe in school. Overwhelmingly, pupils say that everyone gets on with each other and instances of bullying are rare. In conversations many demonstrate they have a good understanding of the need for racial tolerance. As one pupil said, 'it doesn't matter what colour your skin is, it's what you're like inside that counts.' Pupils, as well as almost all parents and carers, express confidence in the school's anti-bullying systems and are keen to point out that if required, action is taken swiftly. All pupils say there is an adult they can turn to for help if they are troubled or sad.

The school's rigorous arrangements to promote regular attendance have brought about a noticeable reduction in absenteeism. Attendance is in line with the national average and almost all pupils arrive punctually at the start of each day.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides astute leadership. She is supported by able senior and middle leaders, who all work together well. Teamwork is strong and morale good. A robust system to monitor and evaluate the work of the school is well established, and used effectively by everyone to set key priorities and successfully drive improvements. Professional development is closely aligned to school priorities and is a key factor in securing improvements in teaching and learning. Strong partnerships have been established with other local schools. This enables the school to access a greater range of experiences for pupils to enhance their learning. All these factors indicate a good capacity for sustaining school improvement.

Management systems to track the progress made by pupils over time are robust and easy to access and interpret. Very careful attention is given to monitoring the

progress made by the different groups of pupils. Consequently, leaders are able to identify gaps between performance and potential underachievement in order to target improvement strategies quickly. The governing body works closely with the school. Members provide effective support and are fully involved in shaping the future direction of the school. They monitor the quality of provision well. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

The curriculum is good as are the arrangements made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for equality of opportunity is good. Discrimination is not tolerated. Consequently, the school is a friendly place in which to work and learn. The very many positive views expressed by staff, pupils and their parents and carers confirm this. Partnerships with external agencies and parents and carers are effective and have led to good improvements in pupils' attendance, behaviour and self-esteem. Opportunities to gain first-hand experiences, for example, through residential or educational visits and visitors, are diverse and effectively integrated with pupils' work; this has a significant impact on broadening their horizons and on their understanding of wider national and global communities.

## 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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](http://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 up 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.
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 children' 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.**



16 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Highfield Community Primary School, Chester CH1 5LD**

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave the team when we came to inspect your school. Highfield is a good school. These are some of the things we found out.

- Your behaviour is good and you all get along with each other very well. You told us that you feel safe and there is always an adult to turn to if you are troubled and that you are confident that rare instances of bullying are swiftly dealt with.
- Children get a good start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes; they achieve well.
- You told us that you all enjoy learning and most lessons are fun. Teaching at Highfield is at least good and this helps you all to achieve well. By the time, you leave school at the end of Year 6, your attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average.
- Although good overall, your progress in reading and writing is not always as strong as in mathematics. We have asked your school to find ways to provide more challenging writing activities for those of you who learn more quickly. As some of you told us, these tasks are sometimes too easy. We have also asked your teachers to give you all more chances to practise your speaking and reading skills, so that you can make greater progress.
- Many of you also said that you are not certain how to make your writing better. We have asked your teachers to make sure that when they mark your written work their comments always tell you how you can improve.
- Your headteacher, other staff and governors, know the school well and they are good at finding ways to make your school even better.

Thank you for helping with the inspection. Please continue to try your very best in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely,

Denise Shields  
Lead Inspector

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