

Huxley CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111286
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	378268
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
Lead inspector	Frank Carruthers

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Ankers
Headteacher	Lorna Pleavin
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Frank Carruthers

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons or parts of lessons taught by three teachers as well as by teaching assistants and visiting specialists. The inspector listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2 and observed teaching sessions of letters and sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Pupils' work was inspected and observations were made of pupils' behaviour at play and around school. The inspector held meetings with staff, a group of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. He spoke to 15 parents and carers. He observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, records of monitoring teaching and learning, and attendance and behavioural records. The inspector consulted the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, but there had been an insufficient number of responses to record their views. He analysed 30 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those returned by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Huxley CE Primary School is a very small village primary school. Most pupils come from beyond the immediate vicinity of the school. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is above average. Approximately one third of the pupils joined the school after the Reception Year. The school does not meet the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

There are two classes in the school. One covers pupils in Key Stage 1 and includes Reception-aged children. The other covers pupils in Key Stage 2. Pupil numbers are very small in most year groups. There have been several changes in staffing, including the headship, since the previous inspection. The headteacher teaches the Key Stage 2 class four afternoons per week and a part-time teacher covers the remainder of the timetable.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- The school provides a good education for its pupils. Thanks to the effectiveness of the provision, pupils make good progress in their personal development and achieve well in school subjects. Achievement is best in reading. The school is not outstanding because achievement in writing and mathematics is not as strong.
- Very small numbers mean pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 varies significantly from year to year. The overwhelming majority of pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Parents and carers are unanimous in their appreciation of the school's welcoming atmosphere and how this helps their children to thrive.
- Teaching is good. All adults contribute very well to the pupils' learning. Teachers plan for the different levels of attainment in their classes very well and deploy teaching assistants extremely effectively. Children in the Reception Year enjoy a wide range of activities appropriate to their level of development guided by a strong team of a class teacher and well-trained teaching assistants.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and report that bullying is rare. If it happens, adults deal with it effectively. Staff have the children's well-being at the heart of all that they do. They go the extra mile, for example to ensure pupils enjoy a pleasant, energetic start to the day on the 'Sensory Circuit' and round off the end of the day with a choice of popular clubs.
- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership of teaching and manages performance well so has developed a highly effective team. An innovative curriculum promotes real interest in learning. The governing body contributes well to the success of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing in both key stages and mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
 - encouraging pupils to write independently and in different subjects in both key stages
 - ensuring that teachers track the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 closely through regular use of assessment for learning in both subjects
 - using assessments to provide detailed targets for Key Stage 2 pupils to achieve in both subjects.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children settle quickly in their Reception Year and make good progress. Significant improvement since the previous inspection to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage means the children enjoy a full range of indoor activities and in the secure, sheltered areas outside. Children enjoy serving customers in the market stall outside and learn to take turns at the computer or table top games. They particularly benefit from sharing activities with older children in the mixed-aged Key Stage 1 class. Consequently, transition into Year 1 work is seamless and the children continue to enjoy the wide range of resources available.

Enjoyment of reading is a key feature in the Key Stage 1 classroom and adjacent Reception areas. Pupils benefit from well-pitched lessons learning about letters and sounds. They enjoy looking at books with reading buddies from Key Stage 2. They take books home on a regular basis from the plentiful stock of books in the classroom. As a result, pupils achieve well in reading. The few with specific difficulty with reading are identified quickly and provision put in place, including external support from specialists. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading varies from year to year. Last year, it was just below average with pupils making good progress from their starting points.

In both classrooms, pupils work well with one another in small groups or pairs. Older pupils support younger ones well. Adults are frequently heard suggesting to younger ones to look at how an older child has dealt with a particular problem. This helps their learning and increases the self-confidence of older pupils. From an early age children remain on-task and concentrate well. A few have difficulty with maintaining attention for long periods and benefit from the sympathetic support of teaching assistants who take the time to help them to relax away from their work and then refocus. Pupils join in discussions well and all become very confident learners, able to research independently and bring their own ideas to lessons. The quality of pupils' work done at home illustrates this point very well.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make good progress, especially in reading, which at the end of Year 6 is above average in most years. Attainment in writing and mathematics has been more variable and became the focus of attention for school improvement planning in 2010. Standards of presentation and handwriting in upper Key Stage 2 are good and this is a reflection of the staff's high expectations.

All parents and carers think their children make good progress. Inspection findings endorse these positive views, though achievement in writing and mathematics is not as strong as reading. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs achieve particularly

well. A number of them join the school after the Reception Year. They settle well and soon make great strides in their learning and development.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are unanimous in their views on the good quality of teaching, which is endorsed by inspection findings. The effectiveness of teachers' planning has been a recent focus, with a valuable emphasis given to evaluating the pupils' prior knowledge and skills before moving on to the next lesson. In addition, there has been a move to grouping pupils by attainment regardless of their age group. These developments are already helping to raise the challenge in the level of the work expected from pupils. Younger pupils are helped to improve writing skills by worksheets designed to guide them. This technique was very effective in a Key Stage 1 lesson when pupils designed an appropriate menu for 'The tiger who came to tea'. However, it is overused in Key Stage 2 and pupils are not becoming independent writers quickly enough in both key stages.

Teachers use their good subject knowledge and new technology very well. The use of a video presentation to illustrate what to do and what not to do when giving instructions was very effective in a Key Stage 2 English lesson. These teaching skills lead to pupils having a lively interest in the very well-designed curriculum. Topics, such as Monsters and Robots, Carnivals, Wizardology and Space, The Final Frontier, are innovative and really hold the attention. The staff make valuable links between topics and National Curriculum subjects so that coverage of subjects is ensured. However, a weakness is that again, pupils are not encouraged often enough to write independently. Imaginative homework assignments linked to the topics involve pupils very well and lead to work of high quality. Special events promoting the learning of gifted and talented pupils motivate them to do well. Personal, social and health education and religious education feature prominently and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Procedures to assess pupils' progress have been improved in recently years but there remain weaknesses. Formal assessments in writing and mathematics twice yearly based on optional assessment tasks do not provide enough detail about how pupils are doing in between assessments. In addition, the information arising is not used well enough to provide targets that will lead to pupils moving on to the next level in their work. The marking of pupils' work is very effective and helps pupils know how well they are doing and what things to look out for next. Opportunities for them to evaluate their own and others' work are taken in most lessons and promote good learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe. They have no concerns about bullying and a good awareness of the different types, such as cyber and emotional bullying. They learn about these in personal, social and health education and in events such as an annual Anti-Bullying Week. Because of the nature of the mixed-aged classes and the small numbers in school, pupils look out for one another very well. Older pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically. There is an effective code of conduct understood by all pupils which emphasises and rewards the positive. Incidents of poor behaviour are extremely rare and the few who display challenging behaviour are soon calmed and their behaviour modified. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Levels of attendance were high last year and remain so.

The school supports extremely well pupils whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable or who suffer stress in their lives. Parents and carers report their children cannot get enough of school. They are highly appreciative of the pastoral support for all pupils. They particularly value the minibus service the school operates, bringing children from outlying areas and taking them home, and praise the many clubs that all adults in school volunteer to run.

Leadership and management

All aspects of leadership and management are at least good. Teamwork is excellent and the professional development of all staff is a very strong feature that supports the good quality of teaching. The governing body has a good overview of provision and pupils' achievement. It supports the school well and provides satisfactory challenge for the headteacher and staff. All adults in school take on a variety of roles and support a vision for the school as a family unit helping every pupil to achieve their potential. No child is left out. Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are at the centre of this vision. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, all staff have developed a good understanding of how well the school is performing and where weaknesses are. School self-evaluation is accurate; the school improvement plan has identified weaknesses that match those found in this inspection. Staff have set about implementing actions listed in the plan but their full impact is yet to be felt.

The curriculum has been very well designed to excite the interest of pupils and includes several whole-school and class visits each year. It promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Improvements to the mathematics curriculum in Key Stage 2, following local authority guidance on provision for the subject in small schools, are lifting achievement. All elements of safeguarding, child protection and the safe recruitment of staff meet government requirements and give no cause for concern. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage and the quality of the curriculum and pupils' learning. The school has good capacity to sustain this level of improvement.

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).

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.
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 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.



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Huxley CofE Primary School, Huxley, Chester, CH3 9BH

It was a great pleasure to inspect your school. You were all very friendly and helpful and I enjoyed finding out from you how you are getting on. Now I would like to share with you what I found.

Your school is providing you with a good education. You reported to us that behaviour in school is good and I agree. You know how to keep safe. The youngest children get off to a good start at school and you all achieve well. This is because the teaching you receive is good. You told us how much you enjoy lessons and how the teachers have put together an interesting range of topics for you to study. I was very impressed by the work you have done in your homework books. Keep up the good work! Your headteacher and the governing body do a good job. The staff make sure you all have good opportunities to enjoy school and thrive.

Part of my job is to identify how the school can be even better. I have asked staff to:

- make sure that you make as much progress in writing and mathematics as you do in reading. They should give you more opportunity to write on your own without help. They should assess how well you are doing more often and give you clear targets for writing and mathematics.

You can help by keeping targets in mind when you do your work, so that your work improves. Please continue to work hard and enjoy school. I send you all my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Carruthers
Lead inspector

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