

Highcliffe St Mark Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134987
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	341589
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Mick Pye

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Budd
Headteacher	Karen Boynton
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 20 lessons, visited two further lessons and saw a total of 14 teachers. They held meetings with governors, pupils and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. The school's development plan, lesson and curriculum plans, governing body minutes and school policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the health and safety and safeguarding of pupils, were scrutinised. Inspectors also looked at completed questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and those from 149 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The attainment and progress of pupils in the core subjects and whether pupil groups are being effectively tracked and are making similar progress.
- The rigour of leaders' and managers' monitoring, self-evaluation and action planning, and its impact on school development.
- The quality of communication between teaching assistants and teachers and the effect of their work on pupils' progress.
- To confirm the school's self-evaluation of high quality personal development and care, guidance and support.

Information about the school

Pupils in this larger-than-average primary school come from a predominantly White British background. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average; the largest group being those from Any Other White background. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is below average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The main groups of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or have an autistic spectrum disorder. Two Reception classes provide the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The governing body is responsible for the on-site after-school and holiday clubs. The school has been nationally recognised through the Rights Respecting School and Eco-school awards.

A privately run breakfast and pre-school club operates from the school site.

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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The school provides an outstanding education for its pupils. Determined and highly focused leadership by the headteacher has brought significant improvement in the attainment of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Highly effective tracking of pupils' progress enables the school to identify those requiring additional support. There is a very flexible programme of intervention which, coupled with the very good work of some skilled teaching assistants, results in the barriers for learning being effectively lowered for these pupils. They make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils say they feel extremely safe and they are involved in assessing risk from an early age. For example, Reception children are asked about how their experience in going to the park can help keep the other class safe when they visit. One parent wrote that the school is: 'A superb learning environment. Our child is growing into a thoughtful self-motivator.' The exceptional care, guidance and support given to all groups of pupils results in their outstanding personal development, and they quickly develop as independent learners. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. Year 5 pupils showed excellent social skills as they moved from lessons to the environment of collective worship. A very high level of respect and empathy was demonstrated during the Remembrance Day assembly.

Teaching is good overall, and outstanding lessons were observed. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because teachers make clear the learning objectives and the pupils use these to evaluate their progress. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond accordingly. While the majority of pupils respond well to teachers' comments in marking, this is inconsistent and, consequently, opportunities for them to reflect on their learning are missed. The majority of teachers use assessment well to plan work that challenges pupils of different abilities, and results in some very good and outstanding lessons. On occasions teachers identify tasks for pupils to do rather than concentrating on the learning expected of different groups of pupils. When this happens progress slows for some pupils.

In the 2009 national tests at the end of Year 6, overall attainment was very high, continuing an upward trend over recent years. This constitutes good progress for pupils given their starting points. The evidence is that this is replicated in the 2010 unvalidated test results. Curriculum information and reports go home to parents and carers, and they have regular opportunities to meet with teachers to discuss the progress of their children. However, a few parents expressed concern over the quality of some aspects of communication with the school, particularly regarding pupils' progress. The school has already identified this as a development priority but acknowledges the need to accelerate its efforts in this area.

There is a highly embedded ethos of monitoring and self-review, with governors' visits, for example, linked closely to a school development plan priority. The consistency of high

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teaching levels results in the outstanding achievement of pupils, and is the consequence of effective monitoring and professional guidance provided by skilled leaders. Evaluation is accurate and leads to very appropriate development planning. Another area that supports an outstanding capacity to improve the school is an excellent curriculum that has been extremely well developed to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Remove the inconsistencies in teaching, and further improve pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use assessment information to challenge pupils of different abilities
 - opportunities are embedded for pupils to reflect and act upon the comments in teachers' marking.
- Improve communication with parents to ensure that they have a clear idea of their child's progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils show a high degree of enjoyment in their learning. They attain extremely well and have good attendance levels. In Year 5 the pupils were extremely motivated during a lesson on the Ancient Greeks. After role playing they were highly motivated and wrote lengthy and accurate imaginative stories. Behaviour is good because pupils are engaged in their learning. Year 6 pupils respond extremely well to the various activities given to them in science. Parachutes and springs were part of the equipment eagerly used and adapted by pupils as they explored the forces relating to gravity. They remained on task, thought deeply and learnt well when exploring the reliability of their experiments. Pupils have very good oral skills. They are very successful in learning from one another, especially during regular talk-partner time in lessons. During a specific gifted and talented session Year 3 pupils made use of good, accurate mathematical language while investigating different combinations of coins that could be used for phone calls.

Attainment remains well above average in English by the end of Year 6. Pupils benefit from the changes introduced to improve their mathematical skills and attainment is also well above average. School tracking shows that all groups of pupils, including minority ethnic groups and those known to be entitled to free school meals, attain at similar levels to their peers. Current work shows high attainment levels and good progress across the school.

The two national awards achieved by the school have had a very positive effect on pupils' personal development. Both awards have encouraged team work; the 'eco councillors' are just one aspect of the excellent contributions that pupils make to their community. 'Role-model assessors' make a very good contribution to the class community when they help identify pupils who have acted as positive role models. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to remain healthy, and talk accurately about the recovery rate of the heart after exercise. Allotments give ample opportunity for them to grow vegetables. Pupils are acting as ambassadors, working alongside a national supermarket on a project focused on healthy eating. Other pupil 'Club Ambassadors' provide information to others about the availability of external sport's clubs. The basic skill levels of pupils, together with varied

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opportunities to work on budgets and entrepreneurial activities such as running stalls at the school fair, result in pupils being excellently prepared for their future. Moral and social development is strong. They have a very strong sense of fairness, such as when they discuss a wide range of moral issues during circle time. They recognise the need for charity work, with one saying, 'There are always others less fortunate than ourselves.' They collaborate well when giving their views on the new play area in the local community and are members of the local area's school council.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers build good pace into lessons and make effective use of time targets to focus pupils on their work. This is particularly noticeable during mental mathematics sessions where challenging tasks and questioning allow pupils to learn successfully. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and use their skills to make certain that pupils make good progress. They keep pupils on task, for example in a Year 1 mathematics lesson ensuring that the pupils focused clearly on developing their understanding of key mathematical vocabulary. They use the time well to assess and record pupils' achievements or weaknesses. Their feedback forms give valuable guidance to teachers and aid planning for the next steps in the learning of the intervention groups. High attaining pupils do well because of the challenge and appropriate extension activities presented in most, but not all, lessons. For example, Year 2 pupils respond positively

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when given 'stretch targets' and clear success criteria. Often pupils take responsibility for self-challenge, for example when using a computer program to work on multiplication in Year 6. Pupils know how to improve their work, the 'bookmark targets' effectively reinforcing their knowledge. However, not all teachers give sufficient time for pupils to reflect on how well they have learnt during the lesson.

The curriculum has been very well developed since the last inspection to make it more motivating and stimulating for pupils; languages, including Mandarin, are taught. Cross-subject links are very well developed, and give pupils extremely good opportunities to reinforce their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Curriculum weeks, like the 'Reading Book Project', enhance the curriculum extremely well. A very wide range of clubs, including gardening and sport's activities, motivate pupils and extend their skills. Those not quite as adept at mainstream sports have opportunities to develop skills in other activities. It manifestly meets the needs of pupils, including their social, personal and emotional requirements.

Pupils' needs are extremely well tracked and met. In response to the need to support pupils in a particular year group, the Key Stage 1 curriculum is very well adapted to meet their writing requirements. Transition arrangements smooth the passage of pupils extremely well. The school is pro-active in identifying external agencies, such as speech and language practitioners to help benefit pupils. A 'Deaf Awareness Week' gives pupils signing skills that enable mutual support to take place. A particular strength is the use of the tracking systems to identify pupils' needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their progress, as a result of highly accurate and targeted intervention, is very closely monitored and this helps to explain the good progress of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Pupils attending the after-school club showed enjoyment as they practised their computer and drawing skills, and participated in physical activity. They said they feel safe and have good relationships with the adults.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

At the heart of the school is a commitment to equal opportunity. The system for tracking individual pupils' progress is a very effective vehicle for this, as is the rigorous monitoring and review processes that help promote an appreciation of diversity and equality. The headteacher and senior leaders have used professional development opportunities very well. They have effectively ensured that other leaders have the skills to accurately monitor and evaluate the work of the school, and to meet the needs of pupils. The mathematics

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coordinator rightly identified the need for a calculation policy to help improve progress and attainment; improvement is the result. Leadership responsibilities and accountability have been extremely well distributed with highly positive effects. All share an ambitious commitment to improvement; a teaching assistant's initiative resulting in improved communication with class teachers. Governing body monitoring is very thorough. Safeguarding is a consistent focus of governors' visits, for example overseeing the 'handover' arrangements of pupils to their parents and carers at the end of the day. It rigorously holds the school to account for its performance. All safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place. A thorough review of community cohesion provision has been conducted. It has led to the recognition of the need to extend the links with two British schools and schools abroad to include curriculum work. Excellent partnerships benefit pupils very well. For example, very good links with local hotels and other organisations led to them being involved in the Year 6 Careers Day, as well as contributing to the development of the wildlife area.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children enter with expected levels of skills and knowledge overall, but with a particular weakness in writing. They make good progress and the great majority meet the early learning goals for their age. A few make better progress and exceed expected levels. Their writing skills, while remaining the weaker area on entry to Year 1, are being well addressed through more opportunities to make marks. Children make very good progress in their personal development, they socialise well and share resources. They show enjoyment of their learning, for example when discussing and developing drawings as part of their 'Story Making' project on Hickory Dickory Dock. Children have a very good understanding of how to stay healthy and talk animatedly about eating fresh fruit and vegetables. Outstanding teaching was observed but some inconsistencies exist in the

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quality of lessons, for example in the planning for challenge of different ability groups. Consequently, teaching is good overall. Self-evaluation is well established. For example, good leadership and management monitored writing and then identified the need for a focus on developing fine motor skills if progress in writing is to be accelerated. Leaders use tracking information well to identify the future needs of the children. Effective induction procedures and clear communication with parents help the children to settle quickly. The outdoor learning area has been well developed. The curriculum planning has a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated opportunities. Inconsistencies exist in the extent to which planning highlights how the outdoor activities can reinforce the children's learning from whole-class indoor sessions.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers believe their children enjoy school. The vast majority state that they are happy with their children's experience. All believe that the school effectively supports their children's knowledge of how to stay healthy. A few expressed concerns about how the school handles behaviour. Inspectors judged pupils' behaviour during the inspection to be good, and often better. The school has effective behavioural policies in place. Teachers in lessons were observed to follow these guidelines in encouraging positive behaviour. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns regarding how the school communicates information about their children's progress, either written or verbally. This is a focus for school development.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highcliffe St Mark Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 149 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 470 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	59	55	37	6	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	98	66	49	33	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	54	36	79	53	9	6	4	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	42	76	51	7	5	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	82	55	62	42	2	1	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	46	68	46	6	4	5	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	87	58	61	41	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	71	48	64	43	6	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	75	50	61	41	6	4	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	57	38	66	44	17	11	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	39	69	46	10	7	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	72	48	70	47	4	3	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	52	65	44	3	2	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



12 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highcliffe St Mark Primary School, Highcliffe, BH23 5AZ

You may remember our recent visit to your school. You were keen to tell us about your school thank you. We listened carefully to what you told us. Like you, we believe yours is an outstanding school. This means that it is very good indeed!

There are many things that we liked about your school. You informed us how much the adults care for you. We believe that the care and support you get are excellent. Those of you that need additional help with your work get extremely good support much of it from some skilled teaching assistants. We also judged that you have an excellent understanding about how to stay healthy and safe. You make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community your eco and school councillors, for example, do a very good job.

The standard of your work by the time you leave at the end of Year 6 is high, and you make good progress. You told us that the teachers make lessons fun. This is the result of the excellent range of activities that you are given. We believe that you get good and often outstanding teaching. In the outstanding lessons, all of you are given challenging work. We have asked that the school makes sure that all lessons do this. You can help by telling your teachers when you find the work too easy or too hard. The teachers' marking is very good and you have a clear idea of how to improve your work. The adults are now going to give all of you time to think about your learning and what the teachers' comments are about.

All the adults want the best for you. The school is outstanding because of the work and skills of the leaders in the school, particularly your headteacher. They know what the strengths are and also what needs to be improved. One result of this has been the improvements in mathematics. Some of your parents wrote that they would like more information about how well you are progressing. We have asked the school to look at how to do this.

Thank you once again and I wish you all the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye

Lead inspector

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