

Highfields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106668
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	355997
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Christine Harrison

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 of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Moseley
Headteacher	Mrs Diane Dunn
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 10 lessons and saw five teachers. Meetings were held with the school's senior leaders, a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, the Chair of the shadow Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents including policies, the school's development plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance data and the school's monitoring records. They read eight questionnaires from parents and carers and spoke to several parents and carers after a celebration assembly.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether pupils are making enough progress in writing in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Whether teaching is now at least satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and whether there is enough good teaching in Key Stage 2 to compensate for pupils' earlier under-achievement.
- Whether the school's current leaders have been successful in ensuring satisfactory progress for all groups of pupils in all year groups or whether problems with staffing are continuing to undermine efforts to drive improvement.
- Whether improvements in attendance have been maintained in the current school year.

Information about the school

This smaller than average primary school serves the former mining village of Highfields on the outskirts of Doncaster. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is more than three times the national average. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but the number with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at times between Reception and Year 6 is well above the national average.

Following its inspection in November 2008, the school was judged to require special measures because it did not provide a satisfactory education for its pupils. Since the inspection, the progress made by the school has been monitored regularly by inspectors. During that time there have been several changes in the school's senior leadership team. Following a period of absence, the headteacher left the school in January 2010. Since then the school has been led by an executive headteacher who is also headteacher of another primary school several miles away. She remains in overall charge of the school. Two successive acting headteachers have worked alongside the executive headteacher and their responsibilities have now been taken over by a consultant headteacher working with the school's deputy headteacher. Since 2008, there have been significant staffing difficulties which have now been resolved. An interim executive board was established in May 2009 and assumed responsibility for governance. A shadow governing body, which includes all members of the interim executive board, is now in place. Plans have been submitted for the school to become an academy.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Highfields provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. The school's temporary leaders have worked with skill and determination to overcome the many weaknesses that were identified at the time of the last inspection. With strong and effective support from the school's governors, they have succeeded in establishing a stable staffing situation. As one pupil said, and others agreed: 'We have more regular teachers now and we do better work'. The temporary leaders have also worked hard to improve the skills of those who hold permanent positions as leaders. They are now taking on more responsibility for monitoring and planning for improvement. Nevertheless, there are still weaknesses in the skills of some school leaders and the school remains dependent on its executive and consultant headteachers whose appointments are only guaranteed to the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average. However, until recently this situation was insecure; pupils' attainment when they left the school relied too heavily on good progress in Year 6. In other year groups, learning and progress were variable and sometimes inadequate. Pupils now make at least satisfactory progress in all year groups and their achievement is securely satisfactory. However, there are some variations: children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage but weaknesses remain in pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and steadily improving, with an increasing number of good lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well-supported and enabled to learn satisfactorily alongside others in their classes. Often, however, teachers do not provide quite enough challenge for higher attainers so that they do not learn as quickly as they might. The satisfactory curriculum now offers a wider range of experiences for pupils and, increasingly, they enjoy the various topics and are more enthusiastic about their learning. However, despite recent improvements, attendance remains low so that too many pupils miss some of these experiences and, as a result, have gaps in their learning.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and leaders plan effectively to overcome any deficiencies. However, the temporary arrangements for the senior leadership of the school mean that the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory rather than good.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' learning and progress, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - creating more opportunities for pupils to develop their listening skills
 - providing more encouragement and further opportunities for pupils to write at length in topics across the curriculum
 - increasing the emphasis on pupils knowing basic number facts and being able to recall them quickly
 - providing pupils with clear guidance on how to set out their calculations correctly
 - further embedding the recent initiatives to increase attendance so that pupils' learning is not interrupted by absence.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by:
 - increasing the level of challenge for higher-attaining pupils
 - making better use of assessment information to encourage pupils and to involve them more closely in monitoring their learning.
- Provide training, opportunities and challenge in order to develop further the skills of those teachers with permanent leadership responsibilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are co-operative and willing to learn. When an activity engages their interest, they enjoy their learning and are genuinely enthusiastic. For example, in a science lesson for Years 2 and 3, pupils were keen to identify the properties of a slice of bread both before and after it was toasted, thus developing a good understanding of irreversible change. However, although pupils maintain satisfactory behaviour in their lessons, they do not always listen and concentrate as carefully as they should. This means that they are not always clear about what is expected of them. For example, in mathematics, they do not always know how they should set out their calculations to show exactly what they have done and to minimise the risk of mistakes. Pupils' learning in mathematics is further limited by insecurities in their knowledge of basic facts about numbers. Their progress in writing has improved since the last inspection but some pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1, are still reluctant to write and do not write as much as they should in the time available.

Most pupils arrive in school with skills that are well below those expected for their age but they make up ground in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the recent past, pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 has been inadequate, so that many pupils began Key Stage 2 with attainment that was lower than it should have been. The increasing proportion of good teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 is now sufficient to compensate for that early disadvantage. Pupils are well-prepared for the national tests in Year 6 though their overall attainment is lower than recent test results indicate. Nevertheless, attainment is broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and the school makes effective use of assemblies to foster important moral values and develop pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Pupils are delighted by their awards for good work and enthusiastic about the house system which encourages the teamwork that will be an

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important feature of their future working lives. Opportunities for pupils to broaden their social and cultural experiences, although steadily improving, are still rather limited. As a result of major efforts by the school, pupils' attendance has improved significantly over the last two terms and there are fewer persistent absentees. However, attendance remains low and the sporadic attendance of some pupils limits their learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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' skills have improved significantly since the last inspection. They have secure knowledge of the various subjects and topics and a clear understanding of how to present them. There is an increasing number of lessons where teaching is good. For example, pupils learn quickly and securely when they find out for themselves about English rivers and also discover the possible pitfalls in using computers to conduct research. Assessments are accurate so that teachers are well aware of the levels at which pupils are working, as well as the targets that they are expected to reach. However, teachers do not always make enough use of this information to plan activities that meet the needs of all pupils in the class. Some of the work is too easy, and lacks challenge, particularly for higher attainers. Similarly, teachers rarely discuss with pupils the levels that might be reached in particular tasks. Therefore, they miss an opportunity to motivate pupils and involve them more closely in tracking their own progress.

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The school's curriculum provides appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics in order to ensure the development of pupils' basic skills. In addition, pupils experience an improving range of topics which engage their interest and extend their knowledge and understanding. Topics do not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to practise their writing skills and write at greater length. Extra-curricular activities have recently been increased and pupils speak enthusiastically about, for example, street dance and the computer club. However, they also say, quite correctly, that the number of sporting activities is limited.

The school works in partnership with other agencies to provide good care for pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable. The school uses a wide range of strategies to promote good attendance, including rewards for pupils and incentives for particular families. As a result, there has been a significant improvement in attendance over the last two terms. However, some of these initiatives have only been introduced recently and have yet to have sufficient impact in improving pupils' attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

At the time of the last inspection, the school's permanent leaders had very little experience of the roles that they were attempting to fulfil. The executive headteacher has worked most effectively with other temporary senior leaders to embed ambition and drive improvement. The school's middle leaders are now more involved in managing subjects and supporting, for example, accurate assessment and the improving use of assessment information. Staff work well together as a team and teachers are fully aware of their responsibility for ensuring that action is taken to overcome any underachievement. Nevertheless, there remains considerable dependence on the temporary arrangements for the leadership of the school.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are satisfactory. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils are treated equally and assessment information shows that there is no significant difference in the achievement of any particular group of pupils. The school has effective procedures for tackling all forms of discrimination. The school has good initiatives, including dance festivals and joint ventures with the Church, to involve pupils in promoting harmonious relationships and co-operation within the local community. However, the school is well aware that there are weaknesses in pupils' understanding of life overseas and of the cultural diversity of Britain.

The effectiveness of the shadow governing body is good. The school has been well-supported by the interim executive board and, more recently, the shadow governing body,

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in its efforts to improve. In particular, the Chair of Governors has been relentless in his determination that any problems, particularly in relation to staffing, would be resolved. Governors have given very careful consideration to the various possibilities for the future of the school and they have decided that the proposal for the school to become an academy represents the best way forward for the pupils of Highfields.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's progress has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. Most children arrive in Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. However, they settle quickly into routines and make good progress in most areas of learning, so that their attainment by the end of Reception is broadly as expected for children that age. Reading is a particular strength but children do not do as well in writing. Although there has been an improvement in some problem-solving and mathematical skills, children's use of numbers as labels and for counting is comparatively weak.

Adults provide a safe and welcoming environment for children. The conversations between adults and children are particularly valuable in encouraging children's speaking skills and extending their thinking about activities and topics. The use of the outdoor space is improving but the school is aware that the space is still not being used to full effect in enabling children to pursue all the various strands of learning outside.

Although they are not entirely successful in ensuring uniformly good progress across all the areas of learning, the leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage have identified weaknesses and adjusted their planning to overcome them. For example, children in Reception thoroughly enjoyed practising their writing by creating party invitations. Activities to improve numeracy skills, including puzzles, games and the use of computers are now well-chosen to meet different children's needs and enable the more-able children

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to move towards an understanding of number sentences. Assessment procedures are exemplary; adults know just where children are in their development and use that information to plan the next steps in their learning.

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

Only eight parents and carers returned the questionnaires and it is not possible to draw meaningful conclusions from such a small sample. However, the lead inspector spoke to some following an assembly to which they were invited. These parents and carers expressed their satisfaction with the teaching that the school provides but indicated their concern about the frequent changes in the school's leadership. The executive and consultant headteachers confirmed that this concern is widespread among parents. It is completely understandable that parents and carers worry about this situation. However, these changes in senior personnel have been largely unavoidable and, in difficult circumstances, the governors and local authority have made successful efforts to make the best possible temporary arrangements for the leadership of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highfields 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 8 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 135 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	63	2	25	1	13	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	2	25	5	63	1	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	38	4	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	3	38	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	4	50	3	38	1	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	25	6	75	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)	2	25	6	75	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	25	5	63	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	25	4	50	0	0	2	25
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	38	2	25	1	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	13	5	63	1	13	1	13
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	63	3	38	0	0	0	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



31 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfields Primary School, Doncaster, DN6 7JE

As you know, we visited your school to see how well you are learning and would like to tell you about our findings. I would like to thank you all for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us about how you feel about the school. I am delighted to tell you that your school has improved and is now providing you with a satisfactory quality of education, so that it no longer requires special measures. The school's governors, senior leaders, teachers and other staff have all worked hard to produce this improvement and you told me how much you appreciate their efforts. I was particularly impressed by the friendly atmosphere around school. You told me that you feel safe in school and that there is always someone to help when you have a problem. A particular strength of your school is the good progress made by the youngest children, in Nursery and Class 1.

However, there are still things about the school that could be improved. Your learning is satisfactory but it could be better, particularly in English and mathematics. I have asked teachers to encourage you to write more and to make sure that you really learn the important facts about numbers so that you can use them quickly and easily. They should also make sure that you set out your calculations properly so that you are less likely to make mistakes. I have asked teachers to make the work a bit more difficult for those of you who find learning easy and to talk to all of you more about how well you are doing and what you need to do to get to the next level.

I hope you will play your part by listening more carefully to your teachers and trying even harder in your work. Although most of you come to school every day, a few of you do need to attend more regularly so that you do not miss important new learning.

I have very much enjoyed meeting you on my visits to the school and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Harrison

Lead Inspector

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