

Highfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134644
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	360630
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Dewhirst
Headteacher	Mr Simon Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons, saw 12 different teachers and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised the 141 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 152 questionnaires from pupils and 36 from staff.

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

- Whether actions taken by the school's leaders to improve teaching and the curriculum are leading to sustainable improvements in attainment, especially in mathematics and for boys in English, and the rates at which pupils make progress.
- Whether current rates of progress in school are at least satisfactory and improving securely and quickly, so that achievement can be judged as at least satisfactory.
- Whether initiatives to improve behaviour have led to sustained improvements in the behaviour of those pupils who find good behaviour difficult.

Information about the school

This school is much larger than others of the same type. Most pupils are from White British heritages. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school has achieved the Activemark and Healthy School status. The headteacher has been in post since January 2009.

The school includes a designated resource base for pupils with speech and language or communication difficulties from across the city.

A children's centre and a separate private organisation offer pre-school provision, which will be inspected separately.

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 this satisfactory school, the senior leadership team has initiated strategies which are reversing a decline in attainment and securing satisfactory progress. Senior leaders have created a positive learning environment where pupils are keen to learn, behave well, are happy and feel safe. Well planned initiatives have improved behaviour and raised attendance and are leading to improvements in teaching and the curriculum. These appropriate actions based on secure evaluation of what to improve, indicates the school's satisfactory capacity for improvement.

While overall standards of attainment remain low in the current Year 6, the trend of pupils making inadequate progress has been reversed. Attainment is improving strongly overall. This is particularly the case in English because the curriculum offers pupils exciting opportunities to apply their skills in reading and writing in subjects across the curriculum. Teaching has many good features but it remains satisfactory overall as some lessons offer too few opportunities for pupils to work together, solve problems and apply their skills, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in mathematics. The school is passionate about giving pupils exciting opportunities to develop skills in enterprise, sport and the performing arts and to raise their spiritual and cultural awareness. Accordingly, pupils have a good awareness of how to stay fit and healthy and of life in different faiths and cultures.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school through the school council (the 'HIT squad') and their involvement in music performances. The school has much useful information about pupils' skills and abilities which is increasingly well used to identify those pupils who are falling behind in their learning or to measure progress. However, such information is not used well enough to ensure that work planned is always well matched to the needs of individual pupils, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, or that it becomes progressively harder so that pupils can build on their skills. Marking is used effectively to tell pupils how well they have achieved in individual tasks. However, it does not ensure that pupils are always clear about how to improve their work.

All staff provide sensitive care and support, and highly effective partnerships with outside agencies are helping pupils with a range of learning, behavioural and emotional needs to improve their learning. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially those in the speech and language unit, make good progress as a result of the caring support and skilful teaching they receive. Average attendance, improving attainment, developing skills in team work and in information and communication technology (ICT) are ensuring that pupils' development of workplace skills is satisfactory. Parents and carers are very appreciative of how the school informs them about pupils' progress and helps them to support pupils' learning at home.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of the current school year, further increase the rates at which pupils make progress, and by the summer of 2012, raise pupils' attainment to higher levels, by:
 - providing more exciting opportunities for pupils to work together, solve problems and apply their skills across a wider range of subjects, especially in mathematics, and in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring that the curriculum builds progressively on pupils' skills
 - ensuring that data are well used so that work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - using marking more effectively to help pupils know exactly how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The extent to which pupils achieve and enjoy their work is satisfactory. Pupils have good attitudes, are extremely courteous, form very positive relationships and show great keenness to do well in their work. They especially enjoy challenging and lively activities, such as using role-play to explore the characters in their reading of 'John Patrick Norman McHennessy'. They enjoy writing folk-tales based on local and global legends or researching about the Second World War.

From starting points in the Nursery class which are low for their age, pupils' attainment is also low by the end of Year 6, which means they make satisfactory progress overall. Attainment is improving securely, however, as a result of strongly directed teaching which has a clear focus on basic skills. Opportunities are missed for pupils to apply their mathematics skills in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the speech and language unit, are well cared for and supported in their learning and they make good progress because their work provides appropriate challenge and interest. Boys' attainment in English is rising as a result of well-directed work which involves boys in reading and writing about topics they enjoy.

Pupils are well aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. This is reflected in their very enthusiastic involvement in physical education and the high take-up of healthy school meals. They care for one another very well, have great respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel very safe. Pupils are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community through their involvement in school assemblies, musical performances and through the 'HIT Squad'. This group meets regularly and plays a major role in helping pupils to behave well and feel safe. It works with local companies to raise funds for the school and has contributed to the development of the curriculum. Pupils support a range of charities, participate in competitions with other local schools and in activities in the city which celebrate local history and cultural diversity. Average attendance rates, increasing involvement in

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enterprise activities and growing confidence in group work, mean that pupils are satisfactorily equipped for their future economic well-being.

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	4
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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 use skilful questioning to ascertain what pupils already know and offer clear examples of the skills pupils are to learn to ensure that they are well supported in the lessons. The best lessons have good pace and offer pupils the opportunity to practise new learning. Teachers use interactive whiteboard technology well to offer ideas to support writing and to allow pupils opportunities to display mathematical understanding. There is a particularly strong focus on developing pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics. However, in offering this guidance, teachers occasionally offer too much information and miss opportunities for pupils to share ideas and to investigate together, especially in mathematics. Marking tells pupils how well they have done but does not ensure that pupils are always clear about how to improve their work.

There is a strong focus on developing pupils' skills in all areas of learning and the school has developed highly effective links with outside agencies to support pupils' artistic, sporting and emotional development. The school works in partnership with the local secondary school to teach literacy through a published scheme which is beginning to raise attainment in English, and which the school skilfully adapts to offer pupils opportunities to write at length. Well-planned enrichment activities including visits to places of worship,

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performances at the Sage, Gateshead, and links with a town in Yorkshire to develop understanding of environmental sustainability, offer many opportunities to learn about other cultures and the wider world. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs, which help pupils develop their skills in sporting and environmental activities, including choir, brass group and rock band.

All staff have detailed knowledge about individual pupils so that they are well cared for and develop self-esteem, respect and a sense of responsibility. A key feature is the sensitive care for pupils with a range of complex behavioural, emotional and learning needs through the highly effective involvement of outside agencies and the work of the Family Engagement Officer. These initiatives have helped to raise attendance and improve behaviour. The school works closely and frequently with families to support those pupils who need additional support and keeps parents and carers informed of their children's progress. Well-established practices see parents and carers playing key roles when their children enter school, move from class to class and transfer to secondary school.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a commitment to improving the life chances and social and emotional development of pupils. Working closely with the deputy headteacher, he has introduced initiatives that are reversing a decline in standards of attainment and improving the rates at which pupils make progress. The leadership team is developing a clear understanding of what initiatives are needed to help the school improve more rapidly. They have developed effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and have many ideas to make pupils' learning more interesting. These initiatives are beginning to have a noticeable impact on raising attainment in English and mathematics; pupils in the current Year 6 are making rapid progress to overcome a legacy of underachievement, and attainment across the school is rising. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are involved in opportunities to contribute to curriculum development, decision-making and the school improvement plan. The governing body has been instrumental in challenging the school to improve. It has supported the appointment of key staff, ensured that the school is well resourced and has clear procedures to monitor learning and pupils' progress.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust, meet government requirements and secure pupils' safety. It has close links with outside agencies to support the wide range of individual needs of pupils. While there is a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities, to ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided and to raising attainment, current rates of attainment and progress mean that the

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school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is extremely strong and there are good links with the local community. There is a good awareness of life in other countries and a clear understanding of the United Kingdom as a diverse, multicultural society. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress from their low starting points when they join the school. They enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge which are below the national average, although the current Year 1 class attained broadly average skills from higher starting points. Key worker groups offer high levels of care so that children feel safe, are confident and happy. They encourage children to share, to take turns and to behave well.

Children clearly enjoy their learning, especially discovering about people who help us and doing role-play activities, although some opportunities for independent learning are missed. They enjoy lively and effective interventions by their teachers, although these are inconsistent, for example when they learn to link sounds and letters. Children develop independence and a good understanding of how to stay healthy, through registering themselves and accessing healthy snacks and drinks. Staff ensure that requirements regarding children's safety are met. There is a strong commitment to outdoor learning. Plans are in place to ensure that the difficulties caused by rapidly increasing numbers are addressed.

There are clear assessments of children's skills and abilities when they leave the Reception class. However, there is a less clear view of children's skills and abilities when they enter Nursery so that information about their progress is not always used well enough to plan

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appropriate work. The new leader has a developing understanding of how children learn and is well supported by the deputy headteacher, although as yet the excellent resources have not been used sufficiently well to maximise children's learning. Good partnerships with parents and carers enable children to settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage classes and good arrangements exist for transition into Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was well-above average for a school of this type. The respondents strongly support the school and its leaders and how they meet their child's needs, ensuring their child enjoys school, is healthy and safe. The inspection findings reflect these very positive views. Most parents and carers believe that teaching is good and that pupils make good progress and are well prepared for their futures. While the inspection acknowledges that the school strives hard to achieve these things, inspectors believe that opportunities are missed to give pupils hands-on learning opportunities, especially in mathematics, and this slows pupils' progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highfield Community 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 141 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 261 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	60	54	38	2	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	98	70	36	26	5	4	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	82	58	53	38	3	2	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	83	59	52	37	2	1	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	86	61	50	35	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	80	57	51	36	6	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	75	53	59	42	2	1	1	1
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)	62	44	70	50	1	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	78	55	60	43	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	73	52	59	42	6	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	45	66	47	6	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	81	57	55	39	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	67	41	29	2	1	1	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	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.



4 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfield Community Primary School, Sunderland, SR4 0DA

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school.

You go to a satisfactory school which is improving because your teachers know what to do to make it better. The team was impressed by the outstanding contribution you make to the school, your behaviour, politeness and the great care and respect you have for one another. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the activities the school provides for you, such as music and clubs. We enjoyed listening to your music very much. You work hard in lessons, especially those where you are doing exciting activities like performing and researching. You make satisfactory progress in your learning. Your teachers take great care of you and are trying hard to make your lessons more exciting for you. Your parents and carers like the school very much. Your teachers have agreed with me that they should do the following things to help your school to improve even more.

- Help you reach higher standards at the end of Year 6, by providing more exciting opportunities for you to investigate together, solve problems and apply your skills in exciting activities, especially in mathematics and in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Make sure that marking tells you clearly how to improve your work.
- Make sure that all the information that teachers have about how well you are doing is used to plan work that is at the right level of challenge for all of you.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by attending regularly. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter

Lead Inspector

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