

Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122556
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	363955
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Metcalfe
Headteacher	Jeannette Kerrigan
Date of previous school inspection	9 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons, taught by five teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher and middle leaders, and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation and a sample of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from staff and 40 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How well are boys achieving, particularly in reading and writing?
- How is the impact of the teaching and the curriculum monitored? What role do middle leaders play?
- How effectively do parents and carers contribute to their children's learning and progress?

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average infant school. It shares the same site as a children's centre, which is subject to a separate inspection. The governors provide a breakfast club that all pupils can attend and a lunchtime club for children in the Nursery. A new headteacher was appointed from Easter 2011.

Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. There are two pupils with a statement of special educational needs, along with a small number of pupils who have complex and higher-level needs.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a good education for its pupils.

'My child enjoys school and enjoys learning...' This comment, made by a parent, identifies a key feature underlying the school's success: the teachers make lessons active and interesting. Consequently, the pupils are well motivated and respond enthusiastically. Boys' and girls' achievement are both good. The children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and continue to do well in Years 1 and 2, although pupils' progress in writing is not as rapid as it is in reading and mathematics.

The school's care, guidance and support for the pupils are its great strengths. The school uses its excellent partnerships with other agencies to support its very well-targeted support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All of the staff give very caring support to those pupils who face considerable challenges, in a manner which fosters a respectful and caring ethos among the whole school community. The school works closely with the families of these pupils, and several parents and carers commented very positively about the support which they and their children receive.

The school provides pupils with an interesting curriculum. The curriculum in some subjects, such as art and design, is excellent. The pupils have a very broad range of opportunities to work with different media, and produce work of high quality. The high profile given to art and design extends into other subjects through the school's involvement in the National Gallery's 'Take One Picture' project. This not only provides interesting contexts for lessons in English and mathematics but also contributes strongly to the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The very positive ethos within the school has allowed the pupils to maintain good levels of personal development, and an excellent understanding of staying healthy. The pupils behave well and feel safe.

The new headteacher has, in the very short time since her appointment, looked closely at all aspects of the school's work. Working with staff and governors, she is rightly giving careful consideration to how to build on the school's current successes. Middle leaders are effective in managing the curriculum and maintaining the good provision in English, mathematics and science, but their roles do not give them a sufficiently sharp insight into how they might accelerate the pupils' progress to raise standards further.

The school responded very positively to the last inspection report and has developed a systematic approach to teaching the sounds that letters make. The marking of the pupils' work is now thorough and gives them clear guidance on how they can improve. The governing body is well informed and involved in the school's largely accurate evaluation of its own performance. The school has consolidated its good performance, and the new

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headteacher and staff have quickly formed a strong team with the drive and ambition for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing, by involving middle leaders in:
 - more detailed analysis of the progress made by pupils, in order to clearly identify where improvement can be made
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress, to determine how good quality teaching can become outstanding
 - establishing a sharper focus for improvement and clearer criteria against which they can measure success.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well. Pupils listen carefully and make thoughtful contributions to discussions. They are eager to answer their teacher's questions, and enthusiastic in their attitude and approach. This was the case in a design and technology activity when a group of Year 1 pupils, as part of their topic on the seaside, looked closely at a fishing rod before designing and making their own. They used a wide range of resources and made particularly good progress in joining and combining the materials they were using. Pupils are similarly positive in other lessons and, in discussion, say that they like writing because they are encouraged to use 'wow' words. The work recorded in their exercise books shows that they are making good progress, but that their gains in writing are not as rapid as in mathematics. The progress evident in pupils' work is accurately reflected in the teachers' assessments.

The children begin school with skills and abilities that are not as well developed as is expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Attainment is broadly average, and sometimes higher, by the end of Year 2. In the recent past, girls have reached considerably higher levels of attainments than boys. The school has investigated this and found there was a difference in the proportion of boys and girls with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Boys and girls make equally good progress in lessons.

In some year groups there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils are well supported in lessons, and the work that they are set is often, although not always, matched well to their needs. As a result, most of them are making progress at the same pace as their peers.

Behaviour is good. This allows pupils to concentrate on their work. They say they feel particularly safe in school. Their confidence in the staff to keep them safe was evident in their views about a forthcoming 'sleepover'. Although this was something that many have not done before, they say that 'the teachers will sleep by the door!' The pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in the way in which they approach all that the school offers them, and in their positive relationships with adults. Discussion with the pupils shows that they are very aware of the importance of staying fit and healthy. They enjoy the many sporting and exercise opportunities that the school provides for them. Attendance is broadly

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average but has dipped this year. The school is working, with some success, to improve the attendance and punctuality of a very small number of pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
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?

The teaching and the curriculum are good. They consistently motivate and engage the pupils in tasks that are well matched to their needs and interests. The teachers are particularly careful to plan lessons that will be of interest to both boys and girls. Discussion with the pupils confirm that they are well motivated by the tasks they are set. In writing lessons, the teachers are systematically developing the pupils' skills, and they assess pupils' progress through good questioning. The teachers often remind the pupils of the purpose of the lesson, but what they have to do to be successful is not always made explicit. They use stories that the pupils like, such as *The Lighthouse Keeper's Catastrophe*, to develop their writing of dialogue. In another lesson, the teacher used the painting *The Family of Darius before Alexander*, by Paolo Veronese, to encourage pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to create a conversation between the people in the painting and record it on a digital voice recorder. This activity was very successful, but occasionally the desire to link all activities around a common theme results in some pupils not being appropriately challenged.

The school provides a good range of opportunities for the pupils. It is particularly successful in developing the pupils' awareness of art and design. The pupils get a broad

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insight into the wider world through visits and visitors to the school. A recent visit to Skegness Lifeboat Station considerably extended their understanding of staying safe at the seaside. Some pupils spoke enthusiastically and thoughtfully about some recent work they had done on Sikhism, and recalled some of the things they had learned about Judaism from a visitor to the school. Links with schools in other countries provide a periodic insight into the similarities and differences between the lives of others and their own.

The excellent care, guidance and support that the pupils receive underpin the very positive atmosphere within the school. Strong links with families, partnerships with agencies, and very carefully planned provision combine to enable those who experience difficulties to overcome some of the barriers they face. One parent wrote appreciatively, 'The teachers are very understanding and supportive, and have regular contact with us to discuss progress and targets.' Effective care and support extends to the breakfast club, where pupils enjoy a healthy and stimulating start to the day.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has only been in the post for a matter of weeks. Nevertheless, she has gained a clear picture of what the school is doing well, and where, in her judgement, a change in approach will enhance the school's good provision. The middle managers are involved in a range of monitoring activities to assess the school's performance in the subjects they lead. However, not all of these activities are providing a sharp enough insight into how the school might build on its good performance and achieve excellent outcomes for all pupils. For example, the information about each pupil's progress is not analysed in a manner that provides detail about where improvements could be made. Similarly, middle leaders are not rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching with a view to identifying how the pupils' good learning and progress in lessons might become outstanding. As a result, the school's improvement plan outlines broad areas for improvement. While the plan is appropriate to ensure that the school's good performance is maintained, it is not sufficiently detailed or precise to move its performance to outstanding.

The governing body carries out a range of monitoring activities that provide a clear overview of the school's performance. The governing body is committed to improving the school's provision and performance. In monitoring the school's performance it has questioned why boys do not perform as well as girls in some year groups; this illustrates the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity. The school has taken steps to make sure that arrangements for the safety and well-being of pupils are well developed

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and meet requirements. All of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire agree that their children are kept safe at school. The school has excellent links with a range of partners; some of the school's partners make a strong contribution to the well-being of those with high levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities. One parent wrote how the school 'works very well with occupational therapists and physiotherapists' to improve the future for their child.

Good links with parents and other partners make a positive contribution but the school experiences a mixed response to initiatives to encourage parents and carers to become more involved in their children's learning. The school is a cohesive community. It has a clear policy on promoting respect and tolerance. The location of the school presents challenges in developing the pupils' understanding of communities beyond their own. Nevertheless, its links with charities and schools in other countries provide good opportunities to learn about the lives of others.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two foundation stage groups, and some of the older children are taught alongside some of the pupils in Year 1. Many of the younger children attend for part of the school day. A few children enjoy the benefits of the lunchtime club, which extends their social development. An analysis of the performance of the children in the Reception Year shows that they made good progress this year. They have reached a secure level of development, although their attainment in matching letters and sounds and in writing is a little below the expectation for the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The children play and work well together, and display a developing level of independence that allows them to pursue their learning through the activities that are led by adults and

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those which they choose themselves. The children are also gaining confidence and are increasingly able to concentrate on a task until it is complete. The older children respond very positively when they are working with their teacher to develop their knowledge of the sounds that letters make.

The children have access to a range of opportunities for learning, both inside the classroom and in the outdoor area. In most activities, the adults are constantly developing conversation by encouraging and helping the children to develop their skills. Very occasionally, activities are a little too prescriptive and too directed by an adult.

There are good opportunities for children to explore the world around them, to develop their language and number skills, and to extend their personal development. The classrooms are managed and organised well. The adults are well deployed and particularly effective in encouraging the children to be inquisitive and enthusiastic about learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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

Almost all of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire responded positively to all of the questions. A number of parents and carers made very positive additional comments such as 'I have nothing but praise for the school' and 'Hallcroft is a fantastic school'. A few parents and carers lamented the fact that their child has to leave at the end of Year 2.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hallcroft Infant and Nursery 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 131 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	88	5	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	90	4	10	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	80	8	20	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	73	11	28	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	83	7	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	78	9	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	80	8	20	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)	33	83	6	15	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	75	9	23	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	75	9	23	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	70	12	30	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	83	7	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	85	6	15	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



7 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School, Retford, DN22 7QH

Thank you for making me welcome and taking the time to talk to me during my visit to your school. I am very grateful to the pupils in Year 2, who spent some time telling me about their learning and all the activities they are able to do at school. Some of you also said that the school provides lots of interesting things to do, and I agree. You behave well and do as your teachers ask. This means that lessons are calm and you can get on with your work. The school is very friendly and caring, which helps you to feel safe and to do well.

The headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants are helping you to make good progress. Some of you told me how much you enjoy writing. You said you really like using 'wow' words. I have asked the teachers to look closely for ways to make your writing even better so that you can reach higher standards. Attendance has fallen this year, but you can raise it again by coming to school every day unless you are poorly.

You go to a good school. Your new headteacher is looking for ways to make the school even better and to improve the opportunities that the school gives you. You can help to make it even better too by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector

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