



Highfield Junior and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103215
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 286593
Inspection dates 27–28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Tom Simpson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Highfield Road
School category	Community		Saltley
Age range of pupils	4–11		Birmingham B8 3QF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 3270798
Number on roll (school)	833	Fax number	0121 3272582
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Naseem Ashraf
		Headteacher	Nick Jones
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large primary school serving an area of significant social deprivation. More than half the pupils are entitled to free school meals and the percentage with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above average. Nearly all the pupils have English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is well below average. The school has received a number of awards in the past few years including the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school is providing a satisfactory education, has a number of strengths and is improving. It has successfully addressed most of the key issues raised by the last report. For example, the management of the provision for pupils with English as an additional language is now effective. Standards in Years 3 to 6 have risen significantly over the past two years. Many strategies have been put in place to raise standards and to improve the quality of pupils' education. These, together with the enthusiasm and commitment of staff at all levels, mean that the school has a good capacity to improve yet further in the future.

One of the main strengths of the school is the effective personal care that is provided for the pupils. Despite the size of the school, the pupils are well known to staff as individuals and are successfully encouraged to develop their self-confidence. This impacts well on their personal development, which is good. Many parents expressed confidence in the way that their children are cared for. One parent wrote, 'The teachers are pleasant, make time to talk over any problems and try to find solutions to them.' The pupils are happy and well behaved at school. Most are enthusiastic about the work they are given and are keen to learn. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and there are particular strengths in the social and moral aspects. The school provides a good and enriched curriculum which is supporting rising standards and the quality of pupils' learning well.

Provision for children in the Reception classes is good which means that they get off to a good start. The pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are at an early stage of English language acquisition are well supported. The headteacher and other senior staff have a high level of commitment to raising standards and the quality of pupils' education. All are appropriately involved in checking the school's strengths and weaknesses and planning for further improvements. They are involved in a wide range of appropriate monitoring and intervention strategies. For example, they are giving extra support to groups of potentially more able pupils in Years 1 and 2, which is already beginning to have a positive effect on their achievement. Action taken has already resulted in a rise in standards in Years 3 to 6. The overall management structure at the school is in the process of being developed further to extend the role of middle managers in monitoring and improving standards. Leadership and management are, therefore, currently satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and there are examples of good teaching throughout the school. However, the quality of teaching and, therefore, its impact on pupils' progress, is too inconsistent. By the time they leave the school, pupils reach standards that are below the national average overall. However, their achievement is at least satisfactory in terms of their starting points. Nevertheless, some potentially more able pupils are not achieving as well as they might, especially in Years 1 and 2. Despite the school's efforts and recent improvements, standards in Years 1 and 2 are still not high enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards, particularly for more able pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Develop greater consistency in the quality of teaching by ensuring that the features of the best teaching are adopted throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving, although standards are still below average overall. In 2006, Year 2 National Curriculum assessment results were exceptionally low in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of the Year 6 tests were below average but, as a result of the school's efforts, were a significant improvement over those of the previous year. The school is striving to improve standards in Years 1 and 2 by introducing a number of measures to improve performance. Analysis of the school's tracking system, as well as a scrutiny of pupils' work, indicate that these are beginning to have a positive effect. For example, handwriting is now often of a good standard.

Children get off to a good start when they enter the Reception classes, particularly in developing social and learning skills. As they move through the school, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make at least satisfactory progress against their starting points. However, some potentially more able pupils are not achieving as well as they might, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Pupils who are at an early stage of English language acquisition make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because 'teachers know how to handle children so we like coming'. Attendance has improved in the recent past as a result of the school's robust procedures but is still below the national average. Pupils enjoy their lessons, especially in subjects where they can investigate things for themselves. Pupils have responded well to a range of initiatives to raise their awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They take advantage of opportunities to join the keep fit club, drink water regularly through the day and know the importance of eating fresh fruit regularly. Pupils say they feel safe as a result of increased security measures. Work on fire safety, road safety and drugs awareness adds to pupils' knowledge of living healthily and keeping safe. Their views are heard through the school council and as representatives on the local Young People's Parliament. Year 6 pupils take responsibility for younger ones as playground mediators. Pupils are polite, open and friendly. Behaviour is good and pupils understand the rewards system. Through a wide range of fund raising events, pupils enthusiastically help those less fortunate than themselves. They gain a range of basic skills which prepares them satisfactorily for the adult world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are instances of good teaching throughout the school which are having a successful impact on pupils' achievement. Some of the teaching is outstanding. However, a small number of lessons are inadequate and the overall quality of teaching is too inconsistent. A particularly strong feature of the teaching is the positive way that pupils are managed. This leads to good relationships at all levels. In most lessons, teachers create a quiet and productive atmosphere that is conducive to learning. This encourages pupils to contribute their ideas to discussions and helps them to develop their speaking and listening skills.

The majority of lessons are well planned and the level of challenge provided for the pupils enables them to make good progress. In a few lessons, however, the pace of learning is too slow and speaking and listening skills are insufficiently developed. Tasks do not always provide enough challenge, especially in Years 1 and 2, for potentially more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

In addition to having a due regard for the basic skills, the curriculum provided by the school caters well for the pupils' broader needs. For example, a good range of out of lesson activities provides successfully for a wide range of interests and skills, including physical and creative. A good range of social and health education activities supports pupils' social and emotional development well. However, there is still scope for pupils to have more opportunity to use their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in other subjects. Effective planning for children in the Reception classes ensures that work set for them is well matched to their needs and that they are well prepared for their transition into Year 1. Good intervention programmes are in place to meet the diverse needs of the pupils and to give those with learning difficulties and disabilities the necessary support.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pupils are very well cared for by staff and state that there is always an adult they can turn to if they are upset or worried. Effective procedures for child protection and safe staff recruitment are in place and there are good links with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Specific programmes are in place to boost the skills of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. The school has developed a range of effective strategies to support pupils' overall academic development which are bringing about improved progress. For example, regular meetings are held to monitor the progress of pupils and identify those who are not doing as well as they should. However, there is still some inconsistency in the use of marking to guide pupils as to where they

should go next in their learning. There is good identification of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and clear targets to address these.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership and direction and has a strong vision for improving the school's performance and raising standards further. He is well supported by a senior leadership team, whose members have been proactive in introducing, supporting and leading a number of initiatives for improvement, including raising the achievement of potentially more able pupils. The school has recently further developed its management structure in order to increase the involvement of other members of staff and broaden accountability for pupils' progress. However, some of these changes are still at a relatively early stage of implementation and it is too soon for them to have had a full impact on standards or on the consistency of teaching.

The governing body is supportive in many ways and satisfies its statutory responsibilities. It is prepared to challenge the school management if appropriate. However, its role in the strategic monitoring of the curriculum is still underdeveloped. Rigorous monitoring of provision by the leadership team and other senior staff effectively supports school self-evaluation. Again, however, the impact on standards has yet to be fully realised. The school has had an above average carry forward of funds in the recent past. This situation is now resolved as the money has been used to improve the buildings and its information and communication technology capacity.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. You told us how much you like your school. We enjoyed our visit and now want to share with you what we thought about your school. We found that your school provides you with a sound education and has several strengths.

Here are some of the things that we found to be particularly good:

- you are well behaved and your personal development is good. For example, you enjoy your lessons and have a good idea of how to lead healthy lifestyles. You are good at helping people who are less fortunate than yourselves
- you are well cared for, supported and guided by the adults at the school.
- you have a good curriculum provided for you. Your work is interesting and you have a good range of out of lesson activities
- the headteacher and staff are working hard to make the school even better and ensure that you are reaching higher standards in your work.

Here are some of the things we have suggested to help the school improve:

- make sure that you all achieve as well as you can, especially if you are quick to learn
- share the best ideas about teaching and learning so that all teaching is good.

Thank you again for your help.