

Higher Failsworth Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134784
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	295315
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Alan Smith
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Kitchen
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	Stansfield Road Failsworth Manchester M35 9EA
Telephone number	0161 6812645
Fax number	0161 2191773

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school, which opened in September 2004 following the amalgamation of neighbouring junior and infant schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number speak English as an additional language. At the time of the last inspection the overall effectiveness of the school was found to be inadequate and the school was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Higher Failsworth Primary School is a satisfactory and improving school with a number of good features. Overall, the school has made sound progress since the last inspection so that achievement and standards are now satisfactory. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Children's standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are lower than those expected for their age. As a result of the school's high quality provision in the early years, they make good progress and enter Year 1 with standards that are broadly average. Data from 2006 show that the rate of progress slows during Key Stage 1 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below national expectations, although there are signs that the rate of progress in Key Stage 1 is improving. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress during Key Stage 2 and results in the 2006 national tests showed a significant improvement on the previous year's results, especially in English, where pupils made outstanding progress as a result of staff commitment to an intensive and effective improvement programme. Although the 2006 tests showed that pupils' standards in mathematics and science had improved, progress was not as great and there is still some underachievement in these subjects, particularly in the case of the most able pupils.

Pupils' personal development and well-being have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Pupils are courteous and considerate to each other and to adults. Behaviour is consistently good. The school works hard to ensure that parents and pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Attendance figures are broadly in line with the national average. Pupils have a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles. An effective system of rewards and sanctions helps to motivate pupils to achieve, both individually and as a part of a team. Work with a number of organisations within the community, for example, the local library and historical society, has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Good progress has been made in improving pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics, and the recent acquisition of extensive resources for information and communication technology (ICT) has had a positive impact on skills development.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A notable strength is the quality of relationships within the classroom; pupils and adults work well together and the pupils are particularly keen to support each other. Although there are examples of good and very good teaching, too many lessons do not provide adequate challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. The school has started to develop a curriculum that links subjects through topic work and most teachers and pupils have welcomed this initiative. However, there is currently limited evidence of a whole-school approach and the use of high-quality resources is not sufficiently widespread. Consequently, the impact of this development, in terms of improving teaching and learning, is not yet apparent.

The school cares well for its pupils, and particularly good care is provided for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Academic guidance is good, and the use of new systems for tracking pupils' progress is helping staff to set challenging and realistic targets.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is well managed and results in pupils making good progress in all areas of learning. The school has adopted an innovative approach in creating an inspiring learning environment, which enables children to work and play productively in a number of specially equipped areas.

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good features and the school benefits from a very good relationship with the local authority. The school provides satisfactory value for money and the capacity to make further improvements is good, as a result of its recent track record of improving standards, especially in English.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in mathematics and science, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is all at least good.
- Ensure that curriculum development is managed effectively through a whole-school approach designed to improve classroom practice, supported by high quality resources.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, standards have improved and, overall, pupils now make satisfactory progress. When they enter the Foundation Stage, attainment for the majority of children is below that expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. As a result of consistently good provision, they make good progress and reach standards that are broadly average by the end of the Foundation Stage. However, data from the past few years show that this rate of progress is not maintained during Key Stage 1; standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been below expected levels. The school anticipates that this trend will be reversed this year, especially in reading, where inspection evidence shows that there are early signs of accelerating progress. The 2006 national test results for Key Stage 2 pupils showed a significant improvement on the previous year's figures; performance in English was particularly impressive, with pupils making outstanding progress. Results in mathematics and science, although improved, indicate that there was still some underachievement, particularly in the case of the most able pupils. The school is fully aware of the issues that remain in mathematics and science. The school's management is committed to continuing the very good work carried out as part of an intensive support programme, which proved so successful in raising standards in English. Inspection evidence suggests that there are early signs of improvements in pupils' progress in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the high quality support that they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good. Their enjoyment of school is seen in their response in lessons and their positive attitudes to learning. Pupils have a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles and the school is working to develop this further. Older pupils respond eagerly to opportunities to take on additional responsibilities; for example, as playground leaders, who look after playground equipment and encourage positive play amongst younger pupils. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and contribute to decisions in the running of the school. Pupils' knowledge of how to stay safe shows as they move sensibly around all areas of the school. The pupils are confident that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively and they know that they are able to talk to an adult about

any problems that may occur. The school is rightly proud of its commitment and involvement in the local community. Pupils spoke with great sensitivity about their visits to a local home for the elderly. A range of activities, including assemblies and circle time, effectively support pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvements in pupils' standards in English, mathematics and ICT, together with activities such as themed weeks where pupils learn about economic issues, help to ensure that they are well prepared for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good relationships between adults and pupils are a strong feature of all lessons. Teachers promote a positive learning environment and are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils work well together and support one other, often admiring each other's efforts and offering spontaneous praise and encouragement. Teachers have made progress in the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning and pupils enjoy using the new computers to develop their skills and knowledge across a range of subjects. The efforts of the school's managers to encourage teachers to be creative in their planning and practice are clearly evident in a minority of lessons, judged to be very good. Such lessons include a good variety of challenging tasks designed to promote active learning, supported by the effective use of high-quality resources. Nevertheless, some lessons involve too much time being spent on activities that lack challenge, particularly for the more able pupils, and this results in the rate of pupils' progress being slowed down.

Marking of pupils' work is satisfactory, although the school is working to improve the quality and consistency of teachers' assessment. The impact of this work is evident when teachers provide high quality detailed and constructive comments that help pupils to understand exactly what they must do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum satisfactorily provides for pupils' needs. Since the last inspection, there has been much emphasis on the further development on pupils' skills in English, mathematics and ICT. The school has recently gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark in recognition of this work. The school has also made progress in modifying the curriculum so that pupils now have more opportunities to practise their basic skills across a range of subjects. Recent developments, including the movement towards a topic-based curriculum, are beginning to have a positive impact on the work of the school as teachers are encouraged to adopt a fresh approach to teaching and learning across subjects. However, this work is still at a relatively early stage; a consistent whole-school approach is not yet fully established and development is impeded by limited use of high-quality resources.

The curriculum is enhanced by visits and residential trips, together with a range of popular before and after school activities, such as choir and cheerleading club, which contribute to pupils' personal development. The Early Birds reading club, which takes place before school, has been successful in raising standards of pupils' reading. Older pupils take great pleasure in listening to the younger ones read and comment with pride on the progress seen as a result of their efforts. The Foundation Stage is a rich learning environment with a creative and focused approach to curriculum content and teaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has a strong commitment to pastoral care and is working successfully to establish a positive ethos in which all pupils are encouraged to do their very best. Pupils freely comment on how well their teachers care for them and show a strong commitment to making sure that their classmates are happy in school. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's effective rewards and sanction systems, which encourage high quality teamwork as well as individual progress. The care provided for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly good; specially trained staff ensure that all needs are met well. For example, a teaching assistant led an effective and enjoyable music session for a small group of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Child protection procedures and arrangements to safeguard pupils are in place.

Procedures for academic support are improving. The school is beginning to use effective systems to assess and track pupils' progress and this has started to have a positive impact on attainment. Pupils are very aware of individual and group targets in literacy and numeracy, and know what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leadership team has ensured that the school has made secure progress in addressing key issues identified at the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have demonstrated a strong commitment to the school's improvement and continue to work well in building a positive team ethos amongst all staff. Effective work with a number of outside agencies, including involvement in a network learning community of local schools, has helped to raise standards, particularly in English. The school's self-evaluation shows a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development, although the school has been too modest in grading its effectiveness in a few areas. Effective improvement planning outlines actions that need to be taken. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored on a regular basis by school managers. Although this results in a broadly accurate overview of the quality of provision, there is not yet sufficient evidence of this information being used to adopt a whole-school approach to improving classroom practice. Governance is good; since the last inspection the governing body has made a concerted effort to become more involved in the life of the school. Meetings are well attended and training events have helped to ensure that governors have a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities, particularly in assisting school managers in making decisions about future developments.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	2

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	3
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	2

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?	3
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.

Annex A

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	3
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	2
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 very much for making us feel so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and watching you learn.

We think that Higher Failsworth has improved in many ways over the past year, and that it is now a satisfactory school with good features. The test results for Year 6 in 2006 showed that everyone's hard work in English had paid off and progress in this subject was excellent! Standards rose in mathematics and science too, although not as much, and some of the most able pupils didn't do as well as expected. We know that the school is working hard to raise standards further and we saw that you are now starting to make better progress in mathematics and science.

One of the things that impressed us the most was the way that you supported and cared for each other. You behave so well, and you were all very polite and courteous to us. It was great to see you helping each other out, both in the classrooms and out in the playground. I was delighted to hear about your work in the Early Birds reading group, which is obviously helping you to improve your reading! It's so good to see that the older pupils are keen to help out the younger ones, for example, by listening to them read, or by acting as playground leaders. We were also pleased that you have such good relationships with your teachers and the other staff.

Some of the lessons we saw were really exciting and fun; you obviously enjoyed these lessons and we noticed that you produced some very high quality work. We have asked the staff to think about how they can make all the lessons as good as these. One thing that we have suggested is that the school looks carefully at the topic work you are now doing, so that the tasks you are asked to do really help to improve your skills across all the subjects.

Of course, this is your school so you have an important part to play in helping it to become even better! We would like you to make as much progress in mathematics and science as you do in English, so you need to try extra hard to produce your very best work in these subjects.

All the staff are keen to help you achieve your full potential. The school has improved already and we hope that you can build on all of the good things to make Higher Failsworth an even better place to be.

We wish you all the best for the future.