

Highfields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106668
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	309192
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	130
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nancy Waite
Headteacher	Mrs S Shannon
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Highfields Doncaster South Yorkshire DN6 7JE
Telephone number	1302 722216
Fax number	1302 727973

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average sized primary school serves an area with significant levels of social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is broadly average. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A significant proportion of pupils join and leave the school during Years 1 and 6. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award and a Clean Air Award. There have been many changes in leadership since the last inspection. The current headteacher, deputy headteacher and a significant proportion of the teaching staff joined the school in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. The school provides inadequate value for money.

Over recent years the school has faced very challenging circumstances. There have been a significant number of changes in leadership, including six different headteachers. This has disrupted the continuity of pupils' education and steps taken to promote improvement since the previous inspection have consequently been ineffective. In a very short time the new headteacher and deputy headteacher have established a calm, orderly learning environment. Pupils' behaviour has improved and they are now more ready to learn. Parents, pupils and staff very much welcome and value these very recent changes, typically commenting, 'The children are more content and happier now.' However, school leaders are faced with a history of very significant underachievement. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have not had enough time to improve pupils' achievement or the quality of teaching and learning in school, due to the short length of time they have been in post.

Children get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. When they start school many children's skills are well below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because their welfare is well promoted and the provision meets their needs sufficiently. However, at Key Stages 1 and 2, inadequate teaching means that pupils make inadequate progress. There is also a legacy of significant underachievement. There are pockets of more effective teaching, but not enough to ensure that pupils learn as well as they should. Assessment information is not always accurate and is rarely used to ensure that learning activities are pitched at the right level for different groups of pupils. Consequently, the achievement of all groups of pupils is inadequate and standards are exceptionally low when pupils leave school at the end of Year 6. The inadequate curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils' skills and levels of understanding are not built upon as they move from class to class. The limited range of learning activities offered to pupils does not engage or challenge them enough in their own learning. Although pastoral care is strong, academic guidance is ineffective. As a result, pupils do not have a clear view of how well they are doing with their work or how they can improve further.

Pupils respond well to the recently introduced systems to support their personal development. Behaviour is satisfactory and pupils agree they now enjoy being at school. This is reflected in the improved attendance levels, which are now just below the national average. Pupils understand how to live a healthy lifestyle and enjoy taking part in sporting activities. The headteacher is involving pupils more in discussions about how to improve their school. For example, a group of older pupils designed the school's new 'Golden Rules'. This approach is having a significant impact on pupils' personal and social skills. As a group of older pupils explained, 'As we chose the rules, we're going to follow them more!' Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. However, their poor basic literacy and numeracy skills do not prepare them sufficiently well for the next stage of their education.

The new senior leaders have quickly gained the confidence of staff, pupils and parents. In particular, they have successfully developed a substantially stronger partnership with parents

and the local community. They are clearly focused on school improvement, but have not been at the school long enough to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses carefully and get beyond the planning stage. Consequently, systems to monitor the school's work are underdeveloped and lack rigour. Governance, while supportive, also lacks rigour and fails to hold the school sufficiently to account. As a result of these weaknesses, the quality of leadership and management and the extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities is inadequate.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When they start in the Nursery, children's skills are well below those typically expected for their age. Pupils settle in well to the Early Years Foundation Stage, helped by good relationships with parents and effective induction systems. Children enjoy a range of learning activities both indoors and in the outdoor learning environment and show they can concentrate for extended periods of time. They make satisfactory progress because teaching is sound and the learning activities meet children's needs and interests. Progress is particularly rapid in personal and social education, which helps children develop positive attitudes to learning. However, standards remain well below national expectations when pupils start Year 1. Staff work hard as a team to improve the provision further and are now seeking to improve the quality of the outdoor learning activities and, in particular, to develop more activities to support children's early writing skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement for all pupils in all subjects.
- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that assessment information is used to match work to pupils' needs more closely to enable them to learn more effectively.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, through improving the range, challenge and variety of learning activities.
- Ensure that leaders, managers and governors rigorously monitor all aspects of the school's work and take effective and swift action to remove weaknesses.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The achievement of pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is inadequate. Standards have declined since the previous inspection. Inspection evidence and the 2008 provisional Key Stage 2 test results confirm standards are exceptionally low in all subjects. The progress made by pupils throughout school is poor and the school has repeatedly failed to meet its targets. The massive disruption to staffing has had a detrimental effect on the continuity of pupils' learning. Teachers are not always clear about how well pupils are doing and so learning activities in the classroom are rarely pitched at the right level to help them make progress. As a result, pupils have not been able to catch up on lost ground. The need to raise standards in the key skills of English and mathematics was an issue at the school's previous inspection and remains unresolved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils respond well to the recently developed school systems to promote good behaviour and encourage pupils to come to school regularly. The whole school community celebrates good

attendance. For example, each class is very keen to win the prize of Floppy the rabbit for the week! Pupils say behaviour has improved because, 'Good behaviour is recognised and rewarded now.' They explain this approach 'tempts them to be good!' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. This is supported by positive relationships with staff and with the local church. Pupils are able to discuss issues relevant to their personal lives and explore ways of dealing with problems that may arise. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school, confident they have someone to talk to about worries or concerns. New equipment in the playground encourages pupils to keep fit, by having active playtimes. However, the exceptionally low academic standards they attain do not prepare pupils well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate overall, because it does not challenge pupils and help them to learn well enough. Training for staff to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning has begun, but the impact is not evident in practice. Most lessons have a clear focus, but they are generally not pitched at the right level for pupils to make enough progress. Too often teachers do not expect enough of pupils in terms of what they are capable of attaining or the amount of work they can complete in a lesson. Lesson introductions are often too long and learning activities not varied enough to meet the needs and interests of pupils. The marking of pupils' work is inadequate because it fails to show pupils how well they are doing or how they can improve their work. This was an issue for improvement identified at the time of the school's previous inspection and it has not been successfully resolved. Staff generally manage pupils' behaviour well and most pupils are keen to learn. A few lessons are more effective because the work set meets the needs of the different groups of pupils in the class and the learning is built up in stages so pupils know what is expected of them. However, even in the better lessons pupils' progress is no better than satisfactory, as learning activities are not varied enough and activities go on for too long so pupils lose concentration and do not make as much progress as they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate because it does not meet the full range of pupils' needs. Pupils do not make enough progress, because the curriculum does not enable them to build upon prior learning as they move up through the school. Plans are in place to improve the curriculum in English, mathematics and science, with the support of outside agencies. However, the new school leadership team has not had enough time to implement the proposed improvements. Learning activities in the classroom often lack variety and challenge. The limited range of experiences in lessons restricts pupils' opportunity to carry out investigations, to write in a range of styles or to create extended pieces of writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are frequently given work that is too difficult and pupils who are more able are given work that is too easy. This means these pupils are not able to do as well as they could. However, pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn French and to join the growing number of clubs and extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Pastoral care for pupils has improved. Most parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for at school. Positive relationships in school help pupils feel safe and secure and staff work closely with outside agencies to support the more vulnerable pupils and their families. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. However, the quality of the care, guidance and support provided overall is inadequate. This is because academic guidance for pupils is not effective. Pupils are not clear about how well they are doing and are not given enough guidance on how they can improve their work further. Some targets are in place, but they are not well matched to pupils' individual learning needs. Staffing changes have led to inconsistencies in provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. School leadership has plans in place to involve pupils more in assessing their own learning. However, these systems are underdeveloped and are not yet effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have swiftly established a more conducive learning environment and gained the confidence of staff, parents, pupils and governors. They are keen to move the school forward. However, systems to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning are not yet rigorous enough to provide a clear view of the school's work. This makes it extremely difficult for school leaders to identify specific areas of weakness and to take effective action to address them. Some measures have been put in place to bring about improvement but they have yet to show any impact in pupils' progress or in the quality of provision. Governors are supportive and develop close links with the community. For example, they arranged for older pupils to discuss issues concerning the locality with a local newspaper. However, the extent to which governors discharge their responsibilities has not been effective and most issues for improvement identified in the previous inspection report have not been successfully addressed. Consequently, governance and the overall quality of leadership and management are inadequate and the school is unable to demonstrate sufficient capacity to improve.

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Annex A

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Highfields Primary School, Doncaster, DN6 7JE

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we inspected your school recently. It was a pleasure to meet you. You told us you enjoy coming to school and we could see you are happy at Highfields. Your parents told us that they are pleased with the recent changes your new headteacher and deputy headteacher are making to your school. You are coming to school more regularly and I know you have fun trying to be the class with the best attendance and to have Floppy the rabbit for the week!

We came to the decision that your school is not as good as it should be and needs 'special measures'. This means that your school will get extra help to make sure it improves and provides you all with the education you deserve. Inspectors will make visits to check that everything is going to plan. Children in the Nursery and Reception class make progress because they have fun learning activities and sound teaching. However, we found that many of you in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are not learning as well as you should. We want you to reach much higher standards in all your lessons. To make sure this happens we have asked your school to ensure that there are more good lessons to interest and challenge you.

Adults look after you well so you feel safe and confident about asking them for help. We want them to help you with your work more and to clearly show you how well you are doing and how you can improve your work further.

We have asked your headteacher and governors to keep working hard to make sure your school improves. We want them to keep a much closer check on how well you are doing with your work and how well your lessons are improving. This will help you make more progress and make sure all your lessons are really good. You can help by always trying hard, behaving well and coming to school regularly so that you all get chance to spend a week with Floppy.

I wish you all the very best for the future.