

# Heptonstall Junior Infant and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107511
<b>Local Authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	309417
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lesley Clark

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	99
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Phil Lawrence
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Perrin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 June 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Smithwell Lane Heptonstall Hebden Bridge West Yorkshire HX7 7NX

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 March 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	309417

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Heptonstall Junior, Infant and Nursery School is in the original Victorian school house in a conservation village with cobbled streets on the top of the Pennine hills. It is smaller than average, with four mixed-age classes and serves a mainly advantaged local community. A small number of pupils come from outside the immediate area. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average as is the number with a statement of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of shared indoor and outdoor provision for full- and part-time Nursery and Reception children. A privately run out of school club operates from the school site. It did not form a part of this inspection.

There have been several staffing changes in the last two years. The headteacher started in September 2008 as did a part-time teacher in the Year 5/6 class.

## 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 gives pupils a satisfactory education. It is improving rapidly and has several good features. The school takes good care of all its pupils and they feel safe. Pupils say, 'We feel close to the teachers because they care about us.' Pupils think that the new headteacher 'has a lot of confidence in us and tells us that it's important to learn.' The school supports those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well and pupils feel confident that if they have any problems or concerns adults will help them. The school as a whole, however, has a rather rosy view of itself, despite its accurate evaluation of the improvements it needs to make.

Most pupils enjoy school but some do not because they find the lessons uninteresting and they do not always understand what to do. Achievement is satisfactory. From above average starting points, pupils reach standards that are generally above average by the end of Year 6. The school has identified that 40% of pupils are more able, with 10% of these being gifted or talented. Until recently, the more able pupils have not done as well as they should. Results in national tests have been erratic and standards in writing well below those in reading. The school identified these weaknesses and from September it has started to track pupils' progress more closely and to focus on writing skills. It is too soon to see the full impact of these measures but early signs are that pupils are performing well. Part of the problem is that teachers do not set suitably different work for the various age and ability groups in the class. Those who are more able do not always do sufficiently challenging or different work and younger pupils sometimes struggle if they are trying to do work designed for older pupils in the class. While teachers are very conscientious, they often talk for a bit too long and so pupils have less time than they should to tackle or complete extended tasks. This also limits the opportunity pupils have to work in groups or on their own. All teachers use up-to-date technology well to demonstrate teaching points and in the best lessons pupils work assiduously at tasks which challenge them to think.

Pupils behave well. They are polite and friendly and are not afraid to express their opinions. Most are highly articulate and their eyes light up when they talk about some of the new things happening in their school. Exciting new events such as the recent science week clearly sparked pupils' interest and gave them an insight into different ways of thinking and learning. Similarly, their understanding of different cultures has strengthened through exchange visits with an urban primary school with minority ethnic groups and through the school's sharper focus on different world religions and communities both local and further afield. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils follow a broadly balanced curriculum and speak highly of the improvement in activities outside lessons through different extra-curricular clubs such as ballroom dancing, which is helping to break down gender stereotyping. However, the curriculum as a whole does not fully suit the needs of the pupils because it is not sufficiently creative, stimulating or thought provoking. Pupils have relatively few opportunities to be independent and to use their initiative. This is why, despite their above average literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, pupils' personal development and preparation for their future lives is satisfactory rather than good.

Parents, pupils, staff and governors comment very favourably on the many changes that have taken place under the new leadership and management. Pupils like the fact that, in their words, 'Now you have to really work for team points.' Parents and governors feel fully included because lively, weekly newsletters and the regularly updated website keep them well informed. The headteacher's good leadership, fully supported by good governance, gives the school clear, purposeful direction. The school uses challenging targets effectively in the drive to raise

standards and meet the needs of all pupils. Under its new leadership, the school is improving rapidly. Leaders have a clear and accurate view of the reasons why some key areas need improving. The resulting actions to make improvements, although still in their early stages, are showing definite signs of impact, for example in writing, mathematics and science. The pace of change and the effectiveness of its actions so far confirm the school's view that it has good capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 3**

Children enter Nursery with advanced speech, communication and personal skills. By the end of the Reception Year, all children are working well within expected levels, with a few exceeding expectations or showing especial gifts or talents, particularly in reading. Children make satisfactory progress. Adults provide a suitable range of activities. Those indoors cover more areas of learning than those outside. This is because staff are still getting to grips with an Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum that enables children to learn freely, following their own interests, as they move from one area of provision to another both indoors and outside. The variety of learning experiences on offer varies enormously in quality. For example, watching chicks hatch and seeing their development stimulated exceptional discussions and really captured children's imaginations. At the other extreme, the dinosaur museum lacked learning potential because children were not fully involved in creating or labelling exhibits, some were out of reach and children's dinosaur drawings were a colouring exercise. Adults sometimes take too much of a lead in children's learning and then children lose concentration. At other times, when adults follow children's lead, the level of challenge children give themselves outstrips the teacher's expectations; for example one child demonstrated to two friends how to add 200 to 300, writing the sum down accurately and explaining the pattern he had worked out. Adults use assessments well to keep track of children's progress and use some of the information to plan the next steps in children's learning, though this is at an early stage. Links with parents are good and the learning journals give parents a lot of information about how well their child is doing. Children feel safe. They are well cared for and welfare requirements are fully met. The provision is satisfactorily led and managed.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that work is at the right level for pupils' learning needs, especially the more able; that pupils have adequate time and opportunity to tackle and complete learning tasks; and have the chance to work together independently.
- Ensure that the curriculum is of greater interest and relevance to all pupils.
- Develop more opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, both indoors and outdoors, for stimulating and thought-provoking learning through play based on children's interests.

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**

Achievement is satisfactory for all groups of pupils. Performance in national tests is variable at both key stages with a downward trend until recently. Inspection evidence shows an upturn with standards above average at the end of both key stages. This has yet to be consistently so

over a three-year period with increasingly large proportions at the higher Levels 3 and 5. The school exceeded its targets in 2008. Evidence of current pupils' work shows they are making satisfactory progress towards the 2009 targets. The school has identified weaknesses in writing, solving mathematical problems and investigative work in science. Early signs are that concentrating on these aspects is beginning to make a difference. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they are given helpful support in class but have relatively few opportunities to learn independently.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils are open and perceptive. They have a satisfactory understanding of why it is important to live healthily. They enjoy the recent responsibility of leading a 5-minute fitness routine after assembly but their perception is that, 'If you have a sporty teacher you do more sport.' Pupils say that their small school is friendly but candidly admit that the 'friendly flower' does not always work when you need someone to play with. Members of the democratically elected school council are beginning to take on more responsibility but have yet to discuss serious matters such as pupils' concerns about fairness and about teasing that gets out of hand although pupils also point out that the school is quick to address unacceptable behaviour. Pupils are very capable when encouraged to use their initiative. For example, a small group of the more able pupils decided their new magazine should be self-financing and efficiently organised a fundraising day which covered the costs of the next six issues. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but developing well with the recent broadening of their educational experiences. Attendance is average.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers have good relationships with pupils and this contributes well to the school's happy atmosphere, mentioned by some parents. Lessons vary from satisfactory to good. In the best lessons, pupils have absorbing tasks that make them think. Often, however, lessons are not based on what pupils at different levels in each class need to learn next. This means that the more able pupils are not always well challenged and can get by with half listening and working at a relaxed pace; other pupils struggle. Sometimes teachers mistime their input and so pupils have relatively little time to learn actively or complete tasks matched to their needs. For example, only half the class used vital information concerning triangular structures when constructing towers out of plastic straws because the explanation was too long and they were unused to making things on their own. They learnt a lot from the experience, and the process absorbed them, despite the resulting 'leaning towers of sticky tape' as they laughingly described them. Marking is satisfactory, offering encouragement but not always making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are beginning to be involved in checking their own learning but do not have specific individual targets to check, such as using semi-colons or different ways of starting sentences to improve their work further.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced and covers all subjects, including personal, social, health and citizenship education. It makes satisfactory provision for the skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT and good provision for pupils to learn Spanish and music from specialist teachers. Extra-curricular provision has expanded this year and with the introduction of special weeks provides suitable enrichment. The school does not make connections between subjects so as to enliven learning and make it relevant to pupils, especially given the relatively large proportion of more able pupils. This means pupils miss out on opportunities to research information, read widely and use their writing and mathematical skills in a wide range of challenging contexts. The recently enhanced provision at local high schools for a small number of the more able and gifted and talented pupils is a step in the right direction.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes good care of its pupils and keeps a track of standards from year to year. It is now monitoring the progress of individual pupils more rigorously and using the information to identify underachievement and give support, especially to those with learning needs. This has yet to have an impact on the more able in terms of consistently high standards. The provision for the small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and individual education plans are well thought out. Teaching assistants play a major part in ensuring that these pupils' individual needs are satisfactorily met. Safeguarding fully meets all current government requirements. Parents are pleased with the quality of care, guidance and support, appreciating the way 'The teachers and support staff know all the children on a personal level.'

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides good leadership and has brought about many changes which have had a significant impact on the staff, pupils, parents and governors. This has been achieved through clear, consistent messages to all; regular information to and consultation with both parents and governors; high expectations of staff and pupils; and ambitious targets to raise standards. This is beginning to make the school a real part of the local and wider community, for example through developing links with the local church, and a school in Rochdale. The school promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily and takes a strong stand on any forms of discrimination. The school's self-evaluation was inaccurate largely because the headteacher and middle leaders have not as yet monitored the quality of teaching and learning in sufficient depth nor evaluated its impact on pupils' personal development. At the same time, the accurate evaluation of some of the reasons behind variable standards has meant that the school has not lost time in setting about remedying weaknesses. Many changes have not had sufficient time to have full impact so as to ensure consistently high standards but the signs are promising. Pupils have a say in what happens and they feel they have a stake in the school's success because they helped to select the new headteacher. Governance is good: while being very supportive it also challenges the leadership with rigour.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### 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?	3
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?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

Inspection of Heptonstall Junior, Infant and Nursery School, Hebden Bridge, HX7 7NX

Thank you for talking so readily to me about your school. I really enjoyed meeting so many of you, especially the group of Year 6 pupils who showed me their work. Thank you too to the groups of school councillors who spoke with my colleague. Your views were very helpful. You are quite right that your school is changing rapidly and it was lovely to see your enthusiasm for some of the new things such as the science week. You reach above average standards in your work but then you should do because you are very capable. Your school gives you a satisfactory education; this means it does some things well and some things need improving. This is what your school does well.

- Your teachers and other adults take good care of you and so you feel safe in school.
- You behave well and most of you enjoy school.
- Your headteacher has made a big impact and has big ambitions for the future.

This is what I have asked your school to do next.

- Ensure that teachers help you to learn better by making sure that the work you do is at the right level to help you learn well, that you have the time and opportunity to tackle and complete tasks that you have to work at, and that you have the chance to work together independently.
- Ensure the curriculum is more interesting and relevant to your interests.
- Give children in class 1 more opportunities for stimulating and thought-provoking learning through play both indoors and outdoors based on those children's interests.

We hope you enjoy all the new and exciting learning that these changes will give you.