

Highfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134644
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	316269
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	326
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jim Nicol
Headteacher	Ms Jane Caldwell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Fordfield Road Sunderland SR4 0DA
Telephone number	0191 553 7655
Fax number	0191 553 7658

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Highfield is larger than average sized school with a 39 place nursery. The school opened in September 2006 having been formed from the merger of Havelock and Pallion Primary Schools. Pupils moved into a new school building in April 2007. The school draws most of its pupils from the parishes of South Hylton and Pallion in central Sunderland. This is an area of high socio-economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high. Highfield is an 'extended school' and caters for babies and younger children as well as adults.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Highfield is a good school. It has many outstanding features. Leadership and management are outstanding and lead to an excellent learning environment in the school. A 'can do' attitude prevails. All staff and pupils work together and support each other so that everyone can achieve well. Pupils' enjoy their education and their confidence grows in this outstandingly caring and supportive environment which leads to excellent personal development. Pupils' safety, health and well-being are at the heart of the school's work. They are encouraged to take responsibility and develop good basic skills which prepare them well for their future. The final line of the school song, 'We're special you know', sums up the positive way in which pupils at Highfield are encouraged to think of themselves.

Children enter the Nursery with skills which are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and throughout the school, to reach broadly average standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils make good progress because of good teaching, although sometimes teachers' expectations of them are not always high enough and lessons lack sufficient challenge. The curriculum is outstanding, innovative and engages their interest. The school places great emphasis on the performing arts and through this medium all are given a chance to shine. Pupils quickly lose their shyness as, through dancing, acting, singing and playing, their self-esteem increases.

Both pupils and parents say how proud they are of their new school. Excellent links have been forged with parents, the wider community and with outside agencies. These links all enrich the school's work and the provision it can make for pupils. This school, where everyone is greatly valued and supported is providing well for its pupils and has outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When they enter the Foundation Stage children's skills and knowledge are well below those which are typical for their age. They make good progress throughout Nursery and the Reception class, and when they move to Year 1 most reach below average standards. Although children enter with very limited communication and language skills, they quickly make progress in these aspects because of well planned support and focused small group and individual teaching. This helps to develop their vocabulary and speaking skills well. Language development is reinforced by good opportunities for imaginative role-play and by the systematic teaching of letters and sounds, which is helping children to make an early start on reading and spelling. The quality of teaching provided by the whole team is consistently good and ensures that good attitudes to learning are established early. Whilst the indoor environment is well organised to give children a range of experiences, opportunities for learning outdoors are at an earlier stage of development. Children's personal and social development is good as demonstrated by the excellent behaviour and high levels of participation in focused activities. Children thrive in the high quality, nurturing environment provided for them and are extremely well cared for. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. There are good links with parents, who are valued as partners, and with the children's centre and child care. Children from child care enjoy being able to join the Nursery for some shared activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all lessons challenge pupils and that teachers' expectations are consistently high.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils currently make good progress throughout the school from a starting point that is well below what is typical for their age when they start Nursery. The school monitors pupils' work carefully, standards are broadly average and pupils are on track to meet their targets.

In assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 pupils reached below average standards. However, given their starting points and capabilities, this represents good achievement. Standards were highest in mathematics and reading and lower in writing. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2. In the national tests in 2007, Year 6 pupils reached standards which were below average in English but close to the national average in mathematics and science. The school narrowly missed meeting its very challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities get very constructive individual help from teachers and teaching assistants which helps them to achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Pupils really enjoy coming to school. They say, 'There's plenty to do before and after school and it's fun.' Pupils also say they feel safe and well cared for, and school councillors commented, 'There's always a teacher there for you.' Attendance is close to the national average. A range of highly effective strategies to raise attendance have been put in place, including rewards. These are having a very positive impact and attendance has been steadily improving since the school opened. Pupils have a clear understanding of what they must do to be healthy and stay safe because these are well promoted through the curriculum. A very high proportion of pupils attend after school clubs including sports, dance and drama. Pupils are very well mannered and show genuine consideration for each other. They make a significant contribution to the community through performances and visits. Pupils are prepared very well for their future learning and life as young adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good overall quality of teaching and learning is reflected in pupils' achievement and rising standards. Throughout the school, relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Teachers praise and reward their pupils frequently, which gives them confidence and reinforces the 'can do' attitude which pervades the school. Pupils respond very well to their teachers' rigorous expectations of responsible behaviour and work hard. Teachers often make good use of learning resources to explain ideas clearly and imaginatively. The best lessons feature precise and stimulating questioning and they end with pupils being given opportunities to reflect on how well they have achieved the lesson objectives. Most marking of pupils' work is thorough, supportive and identifies individual points for improvement. Teaching assistants provide

high-quality support for learning, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils show great enthusiasm for their work and want to achieve. Most often the work planned for pupils is carefully matched to their abilities. However, in some lessons pupils are not sufficiently challenged because their teachers' expectations are not high enough. In these lessons, pace is slower and the teaching makes fewer references to achieving the targets which have been set.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it engages pupils. It is flexible, reviewed regularly and very creative use is made of lesson time to ensure pupils really enjoy learning and are exposed to a huge range of different experiences. On Thursday afternoon and Friday each week all pupils are almost exclusively involved in creative and practical activities. The school's emphasis on dance, drama and music, and the provision of specialist resources such as the dance studio, allows children of all abilities to learn new skills. Most importantly, participation in such a range of expressive arts develops their self-confidence and makes an outstanding contribution to their personal development. Very good planning ensures that links between subjects are carefully identified so that pupils can transfer their well developed literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about the very wide range of clubs and activities the school offers. They enjoy taking part in everything from cross stitch to computing, and from signing (for those who are hearing impaired) to singing in the choir.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for all pupils is outstanding. All staff know their pupils very well and respond promptly to their needs. The school provides a very safe environment for pupils and staff are rigorous in ensuring their safety. Policies, child protection procedures and formal risk assessments are in place and are very effective. The school successfully promotes an extremely positive and caring ethos through its shared values and a range of reward systems. As a result, pupils develop good self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. Very good systems are in place for setting pupils' targets and tracking their progress. Pupils are given good guidance on how they can improve their work, and this contributes to their good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported in class and through the additional support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants who engage and motivate them in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership of the headteacher is exceptional and she has very good support from a talented senior team. She has overseen the successful amalgamation of two schools and the very smooth transition of pupils and staff to a new building. In turn, all staff firmly focus on raising standards and achievement, relationships are excellent and morale is high. Governance is good. Governors, leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. Having created exactly the right environment for learning within the new school, they are now setting challenging targets and aiming to raise achievement further. Leaders and managers monitor teaching and learning carefully and

recognise the need to ensure there are consistently high expectations in all lessons. Teachers, teaching assistants and the many new teachers that the school trains, value the excellent opportunities they have to develop their professional skills. The right priorities have been identified for development and the school provides good value for money. Excellent links have been forged with a wide range of partners, which enhance both the support pupils and their families receive, and the curriculum that pupils study. The school is highly effective in reaching out to parents and the wider community and there is substantial involvement of adults and children working together in music making, dance, and family learning. Resources are very well deployed, and this talented staff team working in a bright new building means that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfield Community Primary School, Sunderland, SR4 0DA

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school last week. We were delighted to visit your lessons, see your good work and talk to so many of you about all the things you enjoyed about your school.

These are just some of the good and outstanding points about your school that we have included in our report:

- your personal development, and the care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding
- you are taught well, study interesting subjects and learn valuable skills in your lessons
- the leadership and management of your school, especially by your headteacher, is excellent.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- challenge you to do your very best in every lesson so you reach even higher standards.
- Yours is a good school and it has many outstanding features. To help it improve even further, make sure you come to school regularly and work with your teachers to do the very best you can.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Wallis

Lead inspector