

High Down Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109084
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	324892
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adele Haysom
Headteacher	Arthur Grannan
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 March 2006
School address	Down Road Portishead Bristol BS20 6DY
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including records of pupils' progress, the school development plan and information concerning the safeguarding of pupils. The views of 87 parents who returned their questionnaire were considered.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The impact of the school's work to improve the progress of boys in writing, and the progress of lower attaining pupils, especially those without additional support.
- The quality of teaching and learning and the impact of the school's work to improve it.
- The quality of monitoring and evaluation at all levels within the school, and its impact on individual pupils' progress.

Information about the school

This average sized junior school shares a site with its partner infant school. The proportion of pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Almost all pupils are of White British ethnicity. Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. At the time of the inspection the headteacher had retired, but had been retained by the governors to act as headteacher on three days each week until the arrival of a newly appointed headteacher in September 2009. The deputy headteacher acts as the headteacher on the remaining two days.

A breakfast and after-school club, not managed by the governors, operate within the school and serve pupils of both schools on the site.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

- This is a good school which has improved significantly since its last inspection.
- When they leave at the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are consistently above average. This reflects their good progress throughout the school.
- The school correctly identified weaknesses in the standard of boys' writing and took steps to improve it. Evidence from the work of current pupils shows that this work has been very successful.
- Pupils behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- The development of the skills pupils will need in later life is excellent as they acquire the ability to undertake sustained work, in teams and independently, in an outstanding manner.
- Pupils' attendance is high and there are no persistent absentees. This reflects their enjoyment of school.
- The care, guidance and support that pupils receive are excellent. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress as a result of the support they receive and all pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching, satisfactory at the last inspection, is now good throughout the school. It has a number of outstanding features, although these are not yet evident in all lessons.
- Pupils get good advice on how to improve their work through marking and discussion with staff, but some do not fully understand the purpose of their targets or how to use them, especially in mathematics.
- Monitoring and evaluation of individual pupils' progress and of the school's work have improved since the last inspection, when these aspects were inadequate. Thorough checking ensures that slow progress by pupils is diagnosed at an early stage and is quickly rectified.
- The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and has taken effective steps to correct the latter. This is strong evidence that the school has good capacity for further improvement.
- Written plans do not always contain clear timescales and criteria for success. This makes the monitoring of the progress of initiatives a more onerous task than it might otherwise be.
- All the current requirements to keep children safe are in place, but some staff have not received recent training in child protection procedures. The

- headteacher took steps during the inspection to ensure this is rectified quickly.
- The governors have taken early steps to develop their understanding of their duty to promote community cohesion. While the school teaches its pupils to be tolerant of others and they respond well to this, contributing much to the school and local communities, leaders and managers acknowledge that there are limited opportunities for pupils to learn about the varied communities within Britain and across the world.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all staff, including support staff, have received up-to-date training in child protection procedures.
- Raise the quality of the good teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers are familiar with the excellent teaching strategies being used in some lessons within the school.
 - sharpening the process of setting targets for individual pupils, and further developing their understanding of how these can be used to improve their progress, especially in mathematics.
- Ensure that there is a structured approach to the promotion of community cohesion by:
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to learn about the varied communities within Britain and across the world.
 - identifying clear actions to achieve this, using an approach where progress can be easily monitored and the effectiveness of the actions taken can be readily evaluated.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good progress in their lessons, especially in developing their skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). From Year 3 onwards, teachers work successfully to ensure that pupils are able to apply their skills in a wide range of situations, both independently and in collaboration with others. As a result, by Year 6 they attain above average standards in tests and assessments. Standards in other subjects, including physical education (PE), music and art, are also above those expected. Inspectors saw examples of consistently good and sometimes outstanding learning and progress, especially in English. For example, pupils in Year 6 worked together to produce playlets about the characterisation in the book *Kensuke's Kingdom* by Michael Morpurgo. They collaborated well and used information and ICT to redraft their work, then independently rehearsed their playlets in preparation for performance to the class. With the very good support of teaching assistants, pupils with learning difficulties made an equal contribution to this work and as a result made excellent progress. The text studied was of similar appeal to both boys and girls and as a result all pupils made equally good progress.

Pupils say they really enjoy the way their independence is encouraged, and they are confident learners as a result. They correctly feel very well prepared for secondary

school. They show their enjoyment by rarely missing school, attendance being well above the national average for schools of this type.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Behaviour is good and on the rare occasions when bullying occurs they feel confident that it will be sorted out by staff. In a few lessons, when the pace of learning is too slow, pupils lose concentration and engage in idle chatter.

Pupils make good use of training they receive on how to stay healthy and safe. They understand how to take care when using the Internet and are well informed about road safety, including when cycling. They also know of the importance of healthy eating and make full use of the many opportunities for exercise, such as in playground games and more formal sporting activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they contribute much to the school community, for instance as playground friends, a role they also take on in the infant school, and by giving high quality performances to their peers, parents and others in the local community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

A notable strength of the teaching is its success in developing a wide range of learning skills in the pupils. For example, pupils in Year 4 had written poems of high quality, working in pairs. They read these aloud to the class, sometimes reading together, sometimes alternately. Class members then evaluated the poems and questioned the authors about their choice of vocabulary. This teaching reflected the high expectations that staff have of what all pupils can achieve, including those with learning difficulties, who achieved as well as, if not better than, others and

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

developed a wide range of learning skills. Teachers use ICT very well, both as a teaching aid and as a tool to support pupils' learning, as when a Year 5 class used a commercial package to create their own storyboards. In this lesson there was good use of published success criteria that enabled the pupils to assess their own progress, which improved as a result. Marking of work is good and shows pupils how to improve their work. However, some pupils do not fully understand the targets they are set, or how to use them to improve their progress. In most lessons teachers use assessment well to plan the teaching to match individual pupils' needs. Occasionally, mainly in mathematics, work is insufficiently challenging for the more able pupils and on one occasion was too difficult for those of lower ability within the group.

The well-planned curriculum offers pupils a wide range of opportunities. For example, French is taught and there are many opportunities for drama, dance and other physical activities, often organised with the assistance of the effective local sports partnership. There is a very good partnership with the secondary school to which almost all pupils transfer, that includes opportunities for more able pupils to develop their talents further. Year teams plan work together, which ensures that all pupils experience a similar programme. There are good opportunities for off-site learning, for instance skiing. While most lessons contain good opportunities for pupils to develop a wide range of skills, this is not yet included in formal planning across the school to ensure consistency in the way skills are developed. The policy for homework has recently changed to one where pupils are set 'home learning' projects. Inspectors saw some high quality work resulting from this, for instance in a project about the Snowdonia National Park, but some parents have yet to be convinced of the value of the approach.

Pupils get excellent care, guidance and support. This is reflected in strategies that go beyond those routinely found in schools, for instance the use of antibacterial gel by pupils before using the computer keyboard. Lunchtime supervisors are very active in organising games for pupils and are instantly available when minor accidents occur. Staff, including those in leadership positions, know the pupils' individual needs very well and are able to provide tailored, high quality support, for example to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make excellent progress as a result.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers responded very effectively to issues raised in the last inspection by improving the impact of monitoring and by raising standards in mathematics. More recently they have successfully tackled weaknesses in boys' writing, in part through the setting of ambitious targets for attainment in 2009, which

the school is on course to meet. Ambitious but realistic plans are in place to take the school forward. All staff embrace these plans with enthusiasm and determination to drive the school forward. Good policies to promote equality and tackle discrimination at all levels are monitored effectively and have had a good impact, for example on the progress of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and of boys. There is a good partnership with the infant school, but this does not yet include working together to agree standards in English and mathematics. All current requirements for safeguarding pupils are met, but some staff, mainly those in a support role, lack recent training in child protection procedures and may, for example, be unsure about the procedures for reporting a concern. Governors, well led by the effective chair, have improved the rigour with which they monitor the school's work and are challenging leaders to make further improvements. Further work is needed to ensure the school carries out its duty to promote community cohesion, details of which are set out earlier in this report.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the school. They accurately cited as particular strengths the broad curriculum and the development of their children's skills in a way that prepares them well for secondary school and for adult life.

A minority expressed a range of concerns about aspects such as communication between school and home. This included simple matters, such as the times of meetings, to more complex issues such as the rationale behind the new approach to homework. A few felt their children were not making sufficient progress, but the only evidence found by inspectors to support this was on rare occasions in mathematics.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at High Down Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 87 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 585 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	24	9	2

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment: the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress: the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement: the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve: the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management: the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

27 May 2009

Dear Pupils



Inspection of High Down Junior School, Portishead BS20 6DY

We very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. Thank you for making us so welcome. We especially enjoyed speaking to you because you are confident and friendly, and express your views very clearly.

We agree with you and your parents that High Down Junior is a good school. These are some of the most important things we found out about it.

- You all make good progress and pupils in Year 6 are reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science. You also do well in subjects such as PE and art.
- Those of you who are given extra help to learn are making excellent progress. Well done!
- Teaching is good because you are given challenging work that you find really interesting. You are very good at working on your own and in pairs and groups.
- You have good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, and your behaviour is also good.
- You are very well cared for and the school has some interesting ideas on this, for example using hand gel before you work on the computer.
- You say you enjoy school. There are lots of interesting activities in subjects such as music, drama, PE and English. You use ICT well to help you.
- All the staff and governors are working really hard to make the school even better.

We have agreed with the school that some things will be done to make it even better.

- Everyone works very hard to keep you safe, but a few adults are unsure what to write down and who to tell if they find out that one of you has a problem. We have asked the school to put this right.
- Everyone will work to make teaching excellent by showing all teachers what is happening in the best lessons and by setting you clearer targets that you can use to improve your work.
- Teachers will give you more opportunities to learn about the range of people who live in Britain and the wider world.

You can help by politely asking for help, for instance if you don't understand your targets.

Yours faithfully

Paul Sadler
Lead Inspector

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