

# Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121899
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359112
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ruth Westbrook

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	319
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Doug Sparkes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Hutchinson (acting headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 October 2007
<b>School address</b>	Wharf Road Higham Ferrers, Rushden Northamptonshire, NN10 8BQ
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**Inspection number**      359112

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons and observed 11 teachers. Meetings were held with governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors spoke informally to some parents at the start of the school day. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at improvement plans, key policy documents, assessment information, governing body minutes and pupils' work. Safeguarding procedures were also checked. In addition, 61 responses to the parents' and carers' questionnaire were received and analysed along with questionnaires from staff.

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

- How well teachers use assessment to plan for the more able pupils within the class.
- The effectiveness of provision to promote reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- The quality of additional provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The impact of strategies to improve attendance.

## Information about the school

This is a large infant school with a Nursery and Reception within the Early Years Foundation Stage. A tenth of children leave at the end of the Nursery year and about one half join the Reception class from a range of settings. There are three classes in each of Reception and Years 1 and 2. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most pupils are from White British families. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school received an Activemark in 2009 and was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark in the same year. The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2010 after the retirement of the previous headteacher at the end of the summer term 2010. On the days of the inspection, the school year had not started for Nursery children, and Reception children were attending their first and second days of the year.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good school which has improved significantly since its last inspection. Pupils' achievement is now good because effective senior leadership has focused on improving the quality of provision. Teaching and the use of assessment, the curriculum and care, guidance and support have all improved considerably and are now good. Senior leaders are skilled at sharing the school's plans for improvement with staff and other key partners so there is clear direction, and a strong commitment from all to implement them. Plans are based on thorough, accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses so are effective in driving improvement. A particular strength is the continuity achieved in planning developments across the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This good track record of development demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum provides well planned opportunities for pupils to practise literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. A notable strength is the development of writing skills. Pupils across all years benefit from many stimulating experiences which motivate their writing. As a result, standards in writing are well above average by the end of Year 2. Teachers plan lessons well, reflecting their accurate assessment of pupils' learning needs. They provide activities and resources to meet the range of abilities within the class. This has led to a rise in the attainment of all pupils, and particularly the most able. Occasionally, during the opening and closing parts of lessons, teachers talk to the class as a whole for too long and a minority of pupils lose concentration. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. During these sessions, the planning for teaching assistants does not always ensure that their skills are fully utilised.

All members of the school community have contributed to a clear set of values, to 'care, share and enjoy'. These underpin pupils' good behaviour and good spiritual, moral and social development. Pupils work and play together constructively, accepting differences of opinion. They care for each other and have a well developed sense of fair play. Pupils take responsibility readily, with a number acting as playground helpers and buddies, ensuring that their peers are well cared for at breaks. As one parent observed, 'Children have a lot of respect for teachers and each other and always come out with a smile on their faces.' Pupils of different ages and from different backgrounds get on noticeably well together. Nevertheless, pupils' cultural development is satisfactory because there are limited opportunities for them to explore the richness and diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of learning during the first and final parts of lessons when the whole class is taught together by:
  - reducing the amount of time teachers talk to the class as a whole so that time is used more effectively, especially to foster the learning of the most capable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - ensuring that the skills of teaching assistants are always utilised fully to benefit pupils' learning during these sessions.
- Increase pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities which are at the expected level for their age. By the end of Year 2, attainment is above average in mathematics, reading and writing. There has been improvement in all three subjects since the last inspection which is greater than that made nationally. The number of pupils reaching the highest level has increased in all three subjects. Both boys and girls make good progress from their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because in most classes, they benefit from carefully planned activities in which they are well supported by teaching assistants. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress. They are well supported in language acquisition on entry to the school. The quality of learning in lessons is good. Pupils are keen to learn. They enjoy the many opportunities to be actively involved in their learning, and they find the theme days which launch topics particularly motivating. For instance, pupils' understanding of 'The Great Fire of London' was considerably enhanced by the role-play, costumes and activities on a day in which the whole school took part. The content of subsequent lessons captured pupils' interest well. Pupils collaborate constructively when sharing ideas with others. They say they like working with partners. They also say they feel 'bored' when they have to listen for too long and a number clearly lose concentration in these situations.

The school's Activemark is well deserved because pupils have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. They are particularly active at break time, putting the trim trail and open space to good use. The elected school council is well established and plays a full part in organising events such as the recent healthy breakfast. The school choir is well recognised in the town and makes a significant contribution to local events. Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. This includes a good, age-related understanding of how to use new technologies safely. The school council keeps a health and safety log which makes a good contribution to site safety. Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection and is above average. This, together with good interpersonal skills and above average standards, ensures they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

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

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers know what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear. As a result, pupils are generally confident about tackling the work. Pupils are keen to learn because teachers have a secure understanding of their subjects. They develop constructive relationships with their classes and make lessons interesting. The quality of teachers' questioning is generally good, and helps to pinpoint areas for improvement in pupils' understanding. The management of pupils' behaviour in lessons is consistently good. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long when introducing or finishing the lesson and the concentration of a minority of pupils wanes. As a result, the pace of learning slows especially for the most capable pupils who require more challenge and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities who would benefit from more focused support. The deployment of teaching assistants is of variable quality. Whilst they generally make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, especially those with special educational needs, there are times when their skills are under utilised, especially during introductory sessions.

The promotion of pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics across the curriculum is effective, resulting in the award of a Basic Skills Quality Mark. Pupils' progress in reading has accelerated this year through the provision of more challenging texts to extend the skills of the most capable readers. Provision for mathematics is good. Standards have increased because the school has established a more rigorous and systematic programme

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for the development of pupils' calculation skills. Increased and better resources for ICT mean that pupils in all classes have ample opportunities to develop skills and use them to support their work in other subjects. Pupils' personal development is given a strong emphasis when planning the curriculum and this is reflected in their positive attitudes, relationships and behaviour. The carefully planned challenge and themed days contribute to a good range of enrichment opportunities which are much enjoyed by pupils. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures. The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' understanding of recycling and conservation resulting in achievement of the silver Eco Schools award.

The support and care for pupils with particular needs is good. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from an effective range of additional programmes to meet the range of needs. Arrangements for induction to the school and transition to junior school are valued by parents and ensure that pupils settle well. Procedures put in place over the last school year to boost pupils' attendance have been successful.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

There are robust systems in place to track pupils' progress across the school. Good communication between teachers in different years helps pupils to hit the ground running at the start of the year. Regular progress meetings between teachers and leaders ensure that any underachievement is identified early. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work effectively through well established and frequently used systems. The contribution of other leaders to this has developed since the last inspection. However, largely because of staffing changes, some middle leaders still lack the full range of skills necessary to contribute fully to the monitoring and evaluation role. Nevertheless, the quality of evaluation is thorough and leads to detailed plans for improvement. One example is the identification of a group of pupils with particular needs who were not attaining as well as other pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. School leaders investigated the reasons for this and planned the necessary improvements to provision. The result is that this year, similar pupils have reached standards which are above average. Through these systems, school leaders ensure that the implementation of the equal opportunities policy is carefully monitored. When variation in the performance of groups is identified, necessary action is taken to improve provision. For example, strategies implemented to improve boys' performance in writing have resulted in them consistently reaching above average standards. The governing body is fully involved in this work and in planning for the school's future. Its members know the school well through

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their work with staff, pupils and parents and a number of governors make a lively contribution to theme and activity days. They ensure that procedures are in place to safeguard and protect pupils and staff, providing effective challenge to the school on these arrangements in meetings and visits. The school's records of arrangements for vulnerable pupils are very thorough, including the links made with agencies beyond the school. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. Pupils feel part of a caring and positive school community and have valuable links with their local community. Pupils' global awareness is soundly promoted, including through theme days and weeks. The school recognises that there is more to be done to foster pupils' awareness of communities elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Partnerships with other schools and organisations are used well to enhance the provision which the school is able to offer.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good happy start to school in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most make good progress so that by the time they leave Reception they are working beyond the expected goals. This is because good teaching develops literacy and numeracy skills well, through a range of varied activities. During the inspection, there was an appropriate emphasis on social development as children started school. Children were keen to learn and, by day two, were already mastering school routines, making new friends and helping others. The curriculum is effective and well matched to children's learning needs. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those which are chosen by children. Staff establish good relationships with parents before children enter the school. Staff get to know the children well and carry out assessments thoroughly. They use this information to plan carefully the next steps for individuals. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures staff work well as a team. Clear development plans are in place and there is a strong commitment to continue improvements to provision and raise attainment. These

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plans are fully integrated into whole school plans. A good example of this is the focus last year on promoting writing skills in the workshop area. Children were encouraged to write as part of their practical activity in the workshop. They wrote labels naming their model, and instructions on how to make a paper bag puppet or a prediction on what would happen to a daffodil when dye is put into the vase. Because the writing was integrated into the practical activity, the amount and quality of children's writing increased.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers hold positive views about the school. This comment is typical of many received: 'The school likes to include parents and keep them up to date with their child's progress. Parents are encouraged to help at the school making it a real community school.' Parents' and carers' views are regularly sought by the school's leadership. There are clear channels of communication for parents to find out about their child's progress and school activities. A few parents expressed the view that the school could improve its communication with parents. The headteacher has heard these concerns and will share them with the 'home school group' to consider developments.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 61 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 319 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	75	14	23	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	80	12	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	48	28	46	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	59	24	39	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	66	19	31	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	59	24	39	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	67	17	28	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	39	64	19	31	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	64	22	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	52	26	43	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	48	30	49	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	41	67	18	30	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	75	15	25	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### 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.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



15 September 2010

Dear Children

**Inspection of Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School, Rushden, NN10 8BQ**

Thank you for giving us a warm welcome on our recent visit and for telling us about your school. It was very helpful. Your school provides you with a good education.

You work hard and make good progress with your learning so that the standard of your work is above where we expect it to be by the time you leave.

Your headteacher and her staff look after you really well and, because of that, you feel safe and happy in school. You behave well towards each other and help each other.

You enjoy school very much because of all the different activities which are planned for you. It was good to see you joining in with these with such enthusiasm. You told us how you enjoy the theme days when you all dress up and act out situations.

You know how to keep healthy. We enjoyed watching you keep fit on the trim trail. You use the equipment well and safely.

We were impressed with the way you take responsibility in school on the school council or as helpers and buddies. You are clearly proud of your school and keen to live up to your motto: 'care, share and enjoy'.

We are asking the adults in charge of the school to make two further improvements. We are asking them to make sure the time spent on the carpet is short so that you can more quickly become involved in activities. Sometimes some of you need a little more help when the teacher is talking to the whole class so we are asking that this is given to you. We are also asking your teachers to plan some activities which help you to learn about different cultures in other parts of the United Kingdom. We know you will enjoy doing this and that you will help your headteacher and her staff to put new plans in place by working hard and doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Westbrook

Lead Inspector

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