

Hassell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124110
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340493
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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 of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Richards
Headteacher	Kirsty Broome
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons, and saw 11 teachers and two external providers teach. They also met with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including teachers' planning, the school improvement plan, assessment, monitoring and evaluation records, records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and safeguarding procedures. The responses from the pupil questionnaires were analysed, as were the responses from the 85 parents' and carers' questionnaires.

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

- Pupils' progress, especially in mathematics, and whether teaching is sufficiently strong to keep improving it.
- How well focused leaders and managers are on improving teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of the systems in place to continue doing this.
- The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures because there was an issue here at the last inspection.

Information about the school

This school, although larger than most primary schools, has suffered from a reduction in pupil numbers due to fewer youngsters in the area. As a result, pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in mixed age classes. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The headteacher, who was previously the deputy headteacher, was appointed for the start of this term. There have been several changes of staff since the previous inspection. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Nursery and two Reception classes. The school also has a before- and after-school care club, which is privately run and therefore subject to a different inspection.

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

The good quality of education that this school provides ensures that pupils enjoy learning. Their attendance is high and all groups, from the least to the most able, achieve well. While the headteacher and senior leadership team are new to their posts this term, they previously held other management roles in the school. Their ambition, drive and strong sense of purpose have secured good quality teaching and learning, strong teamwork across the school and, in 2010, a return to the much higher outcomes seen prior to 2009. A range of well-documented factors caused the dip in attainment that year, not least some major disruptions in staffing, which affected the continuity of pupils' learning.

Evidence from lessons and from pupils' books show that the school is vigilant in dealing with any apparent dips in learning. Rigorous assessment and tracking procedures enable early identification of any changes in a pupil's progress. Where necessary, well-focused individual action plans are set up to help pupils get back on track. Governors take their roles very seriously. They check all aspects of the school's work and hold it to account exceptionally well. The school's accurate and well-founded self-evaluation is used effectively to establish priorities and set ambitious targets for improvement. All of the above underpins the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Pupils learn and develop well by the end of Reception and attainment is at least above the national average in English, mathematics and science in Years 2 and 6. However, despite much work, standards in mathematics still lag behind English by Year 6. Opportunities to use and apply mathematical skills, for example, in practical and problem-solving activities, are not often enough taken and in lessons, more able pupils are not always moved on quickly enough to the more challenging work of which they are capable. In English and mathematics, marking is variable. It does not always guide pupils well enough in their learning. Pupils develop good information and communication technology (ICT) skills but the school has fewer computers per pupil than most schools. This prevents ICT being used as a natural tool for learning in different subjects.

The good curriculum includes a strong emphasis on personal development and provides many exciting opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways. The school is a harmonious community where all pupils get on very well together. Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel 'extremely safe' in school. They work and play in a safe and secure learning environment free of harassment of any sort. Pupils' safety is taken very seriously, as is evident in the recent improvements, which include restricting vehicular access to the playground, a move that pleases most parents and carers. The school provides a good standard of care for all pupils. The rigour with which it pursues support from external agencies, especially for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is impressive. Pupils leave the school as mature youngsters with ambitious aspirations, well prepared for the future.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the tasks given to pupils, especially the more able, provide consistently good levels of challenge for them
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in practical and problem solving activities.
 - Achieve consistency in marking to ensure it always shows pupils how to improve their work, and give pupils time to respond to the guidance given.
- Improve ICT resources so that pupils can have better access to ICT as a tool for learning across the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

On entry to the Nursery, children's attainment is as expected for their age. Throughout the school, pupils use and develop their literacy skills well. This leads, for example, to high quality writing in which work is set out neatly and a good range of vocabulary engages the reader. Pupils write equally well for different audiences and purposes conveying feelings and atmosphere in their writing. During the inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 thoroughly enjoyed exploring imagery in poetry from different times and places. Their clear articulation when expressing their ideas about the poetry demonstrated their good speaking and listening skills. Spelling is accurate and handwriting mostly good.

Number skills are good and pupils have many opportunities to acquire them. However, their books show that some pupils, especially the more able, spend too much time practising number skills and opportunities for pupils to undertake real life application of mathematical skills in problem-solving activities are limited. Additionally, aspects of mathematics, such as shape space and measure, are under-represented in their books. Pupils successfully learn a range of ICT skills but, although they have some opportunities to use those skills in different subjects, those opportunities are restricted because there are not enough computers for them to use.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other pupils, and many catch up with their peers by Year 6. They and pupils for whom English is an additional language are well integrated into school life and take a full part in everything it has to offer. Pupils are proud of what they do and they try hard to do well. They trust the staff to help them should they have any concerns. They report that they know of no bullying or harassment, and that incidences of poorer behaviour are rare. Pupils demonstrate good levels of confidence in themselves and their ability to learn. They are ambitious, and have already begun to consider the skills and standards they might need to realise what they see as possible future careers. They are comfortable talking to adults and most listen courteously to what others are saying. Older pupils help younger ones with reading but lament the passing of 'peer mentoring' where they learned how to help other pupils.

Pupils contribute well to the school community, for example, as school councillors, and they readily raise money for the range of charities the school selects. They report that they would like to have the opportunity to choose their own sometimes. Opportunities for pupils to develop entrepreneurial skills are more limited, although Year 6 pupils do take

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responsibility for setting up and running the Christmas Fair each year. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They participate eagerly in the many sporting clubs on offer, most of which are oversubscribed. Links with schools in, for example, India and Gambia are developing in them a good understanding of different ways of life around the world. They report that everyone 'is just like us', their moral awareness is good, and they show good levels of respect for different faiths, ethnicities and cultures in the United Kingdom and around the world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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?

Good teaching and learning, and a well-planned curriculum that brings different subjects together into topics, successfully secure the good progress pupils make, both academically and personally. The curriculum is further enriched by a good range of visits and visitors, often related to topic work, and a wide range of well-attended extra-curricular activities covering, for example, sports and the arts.

Teachers generate a positive learning ethos in the classroom. They relate well to pupils, boost their confidence and find different ways of motivating them to succeed. For example, the imaginative use of musical instruments to represent numbers greatly improved Year 3/4 pupils' understanding of hundreds, tens and units. Teachers give pupils time to think, encouraging them to collate their thoughts, for example, by discussing

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concepts with each other. The time limits set for this and other activities keep pupils on task well and allow lessons to proceed at a brisk pace.

Teachers take good account of the different ability levels in their class, even when they are teaching a particular set. This usually provides good levels of challenge, except in mathematics, where the most able pupils do not always start at a high enough level. This is slowly changing with the different approach to target setting that is successfully encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Some marking is excellent in that teachers make very clear to pupils what they need to do to improve, and give them time to respond to the comments made. Where this happens, pupils follow the teacher's example when marking each other's work. This good practice is not evident throughout the school.

Teaching assistants are usually well briefed and well deployed and they make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Arrangements for the care of all pupils, from the least to the most vulnerable, are well organised and effective. As a result, there is good overall support for personal and academic development and well-being. Transition from year to year and on into high school is managed well so that pupils can face new situations with confidence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: 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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

With good support from senior and middle managers, the headteacher is successfully embedding the ambition and driving the improvements needed to continue to move forward. Staff willingly take on board the development points arising from lesson observations and checks on pupils' work. Consequently, teaching and learning are improving strongly. The robust tracking of pupils' progress gives senior managers and governors a clear and accurate view of the achievement of different groups of pupils. They use the information well to set ambitious targets and to boost learning where needed.

The governing body demonstrates excellent insight into the quality of the school's work, including pupils' progress. It provides high levels of challenge and support for the school. Comments about, and the analysis of what governors describe as 'noticeable differences between what pupils, parents and teachers want' have informed, for example, changes to the curriculum, improvements in Early Years Foundation Stage, and the rigorous approach adopted towards safeguarding.

Safeguarding procedures are good. The school is vigilant in ensuring all staff are properly vetted for working with children, and it goes the extra mile to protect pupils whose

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circumstances make them vulnerable. It promotes equality of opportunity well and ensures that no group of pupils is disadvantaged in any way. It also promotes community cohesion well. It understands its own context and its engagement with groups beyond the immediate area and overseas successfully develops pupils' global awareness. Good partnerships with parents, carers and external agencies contribute well to pupils' academic and personal progress.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly. This was evident even at this early stage in the school year in both Nursery and Reception. Children learn and develop well by the end of Reception because they are taught well. Thorough assessment procedures ensure their learning is carefully tracked and recorded. Good leadership and management ensure children's health, safety and welfare in Nursery and Reception. Parents and carers have many opportunities to learn about and help with their children's learning, and communication with them is good.

In Reception, lessons take good account of children's interests. They include many opportunities for the children to select their own activities and develop independence. Adult-directed activities successfully develop children's literacy, numeracy and personal development skills. Most Reception children already form letters and numbers correctly, and those who find this difficult are well supported. Children readily share equipment, take turns and listen to others, although they understandably become restless when kept sitting for too long. They thoroughly enjoy the activities that are prepared for them and can work well even when not under constant adult supervision. This was demonstrated well in the 'doctor's surgery', where they consulted with patients, examined x-rays and wrote prescriptions. Adults have a good understanding of how young children learn. They

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are skilled at developing learning in a way that encourages children to think for themselves.

Inclement weather restricted access to outdoor learning during the inspection but it is well planned for and children still enjoyed showing that they could write their names on the wall or at the writing table in the covered area. The outdoor area is still under-developed because it is relatively new and equipment ordered earlier in the year has not yet arrived. Nursery and Reception share the area. This is beginning to build stronger links between the two year groups and plans to take those links further are already under way.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

While the vast majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school, several left some responses blank, saying that it was too early in their child's school life to be able to comment. They particularly praise the pastoral care given to their children. They also feel that the school has a 'strong community ethos' and makes the most of its limited physical environment. The inspection team endorses this but found no evidence to support the views of some parents and carers that mixed age classes are disadvantaging some children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hassell Primary 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 293 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	55	36	42	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	49	39	46	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	26	31	49	58	7	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	32	46	54	6	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	36	47	55	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	39	47	55	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	32	50	59	2	2	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)	23	27	50	59	4	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	34	44	52	6	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	35	42	49	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	22	51	60	6	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	39	44	52	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	42	46	54	2	2	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). 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



16 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hassell Primary School, Newcastle, ST5 1LF

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was delightful to talk to you, hear your views, and find out how hard you work. We were pleased to hear that you feel safe in school and are confident that staff will always help you. We concluded that you go to a good school where you are taught well and those who lead and manage it are working very hard to ensure it continues to improve.

Staff are very keen for each one of you to succeed and they care, guide and support you well. Your good behaviour and excellent attendance contribute to the good progress you are making, and you clearly have a good understanding of why it is important to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Although you reach above average standards in Year 6, we found that you do not do as well in mathematics as you do in English. We have therefore made some recommendations to help the school address this and two other areas in order to help you make even better progress. They are to:

- ensure that the tasks you are given to do in mathematics are always demanding enough, and that you have more opportunities to do practical work that enables you to use your mathematical skills to solve problems
- ensure that when they mark your work, teachers always show you how to improve it, and then give you time to respond to their comments
- improve ICT resources so that you can have better access to ICT to support your learning in different subjects.

You can help in all of this by continuing to work hard and particularly by remembering to ask your teachers if you do not quite understand what their marking is telling you to do. We hope you continue to enjoy learning for the rest of your lives, as much as you do now, and we wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

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