

High Oakham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133278
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	360470
Inspection dates	10–11 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Sankey MBE
Headteacher	Peter Mansfield
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors who observed 14 teachers in 24 lessons. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, senior and middle leaders and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included assessment information, samples of pupils' work, the school development plan and the minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors analysed staff and pupil questionnaires and the 160 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- It explored the quality of provision for lower attaining pupils to determine whether it is effective enough to accelerate their progress.
- It investigated the impact of leadership and management on the progress of pupils through the school.
- It evaluated the effectiveness of the school's focus on writing skills.

Information about the school

This school is larger than others of its type. It is located in an area of generally favourable social and economic circumstances within the town, although 47% travel from outside the catchment area to attend. There are fewer girls than boys, creating an imbalance in some year groups. Most pupils are White British. A well below average proportion have special educational needs and/or disabilities, of which the large majority have moderate learning difficulties. The school is part of the Brunts Family of Schools Learning collaboration to broaden and extend the range of provision.

The Tree House, an after-school club, and the Little Acorns Pre-school Group, are held on the school site. They are both managed by outside providers.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has strengths in the curriculum, the personal development of pupils, and the quality of care, guidance and support, all of which are good. Pupils' enjoyment of school and their good behaviour and above average attendance are promoted well by the curriculum, and a range of opportunities within and outside the school day to develop leadership skills and other qualities needed for when they are older. All of this is within a secure environment. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has used the information gathered from his detailed monitoring to move the school forward. There has been a strong focus on raising attainment in English, which has led to higher levels through the school, particularly in boys' writing. Other areas identified at the last inspection as requiring improvement have also been addressed.

A detailed programme of monitoring at school and subject level is in place to identify strengths and weaknesses and move the school forward. As yet, this information is not always reviewed or adapted as promptly as it could be to ensure that practice is effective in securing pupils' good progress. It is this inconsistency that is causing some uneven progress of pupils from their average levels of knowledge and skills on entry, and why the quality of teaching overall remains satisfactory rather than good. The governing body shows great commitment to the school but relies on information provided rather than putting its own questions to senior leaders. Altogether, the school is led and managed soundly and has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

The school has successfully reviewed the curriculum to introduce more active and independent learning and creativity. Along with individual and group support for those who have gaps in their learning, this engaging curriculum has been pivotal in raising writing levels from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. Well co-ordinated planning has been fundamental to this. Pupils show enthusiasm about improving their writing skills because they enjoy the activities they are set and see why writing is important.

There is some good teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2 and as a result attainment levels are improving. The quality of learning is variable across both key stages though, because tasks and outcomes to match the range of pupils' needs are not regularly and carefully enough planned. As a result progress over time is satisfactory rather than good and leads to average attainment. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully monitored. However, more could be done to plan materials and activities suitable for pupils with specific needs. Excellent marking was seen in several lessons where pupils were given very helpful advice to help them to move forward, but this is not consistent across the school.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that tasks are carefully planned to challenge all pupils
 - making sure that all marking matches the best practice in the information it gives to pupils to further their progress.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - leaders transfer their good knowledge about pupils' attainment quickly into actions, which are continually reviewed and the findings acted upon, in order to accelerate and strengthen pupils' learning
 - the governing body takes more independent initiative so that it can influence the direction of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Although pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, good progress was observed in some lessons, reflecting effective teaching and planning accurately focused on pupils' specific needs. Pupils with English as an additional language particularly benefited during the inspection from activities and support pitched at the right level. Girls' progress is similar to boys' because resources and the ways in which both boys and girls learn are taken into account. Good progress was also seen across the curriculum where pupils were given interesting stimuli, such as work on the water cycle where pupils wrote about 'a day in the life of a raindrop' and on gravity where pupils worked together on a practical investigation. In another example, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in their communication skills and their moral understanding lesson which focused on them as individuals and the choices that they can make.

Pupils feel safe in school. They demonstrate a good understanding of both how to stay safe and the importance of healthy lifestyles, reflecting the school's focus on these as part of a wide-ranging programme. Sporting activities outside of school are popular and the good take-up of nutritious cooked lunches demonstrates pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy diet. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, with numerous opportunities for them to do so, such as the school council's initiative to improve traffic management outside the school. Many daily opportunities ensure that all pupils develop good skills in organising and working as part of a team as well as developing socially and forming their own moral views. Their spiritual and cultural development is promoted through the curriculum, with increasing opportunities to increase their cultural understanding. Together with their average attainment, pupils are soundly prepared for secondary education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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?

Classrooms and corridors are full of pupils' work and demonstrate in many cases the links in learning between subjects. Together with good relationships between staff and pupils, there is very positive environment for learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a variety of styles to keep pupils involved, including effective use of computer-based learning. Pupils enjoy learning outdoors, which is a good feature of planning. In some lessons teachers talk for too long, reducing the time for pupils to practise what they have learnt. Although a range of tasks is provided, teachers do not always take into account pupils' different levels of attainment, particularly those capable of reaching higher levels, or identify and inform pupils of what they are expected to achieve. Questioning is sometimes used exceptionally well to extend pupils' thinking and awareness. Similarly, pupils' knowledge and ownership of their targets contributes to their good motivation in a number of lessons, but not all.

Pupils enjoy an interesting and engaging curriculum. It encourages their independent learning and is a strong contributory factor in their positive attitudes and good personal development. Literacy and numeracy are taught discretely and incorporated in special days, weeks and themes, promoting satisfactory and improving achievement. The school's partnerships with other schools have furthered the creative curriculum, through workshops and after-school activities, where opportunities for practising a wide range of skills are provided. Other partnerships, including those for sport and for gifted and talented pupils,

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extend the quality of provision. Pupils' personal development, including the skills that they will need in secondary education, is advanced through creative partnerships. Examples include improving the school grounds and global links. Enrichment activities, such as residential visits and a good range of after-school clubs, add to pupils' range of skills.

The school co-ordinates the support and guidance of pupils well, based on its good knowledge of their needs, concerns and strengths. The school works effectively with a range of outside agencies to extend support for pupils' well-being and to support families, as well as to foster pupils' learning. Consultations which involve parents and carers in understanding their children's targets and detailed reports home ensure that they are well-informed about their children's progress. Arrangements for pupils to move to secondary school are comprehensive and take place over-time, building up pupils' confidence for the new challenges.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Staff are increasingly responding to senior leaders' vision and ambition for the school. The headteacher and senior team provide a clear direction which is based on regular tracking of the pupils' attainment and progress and monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. The role of subject leaders has also been strengthened to include a responsibility for monitoring. As yet, however, this information is not consistently analysed and used quickly enough to strengthen the quality of teaching or to accelerate pupils' progress.

The governing body has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, but it does not find out enough for itself to be able to ask probing questions and influence the school's direction. The opinions of parents and carers are important to the school. Effective communication includes regular reports about their children's progress and information meetings about how to support their learning. Partnerships, including with other schools, are key to the effective curriculum and pupils' well-being. Safeguarding is effective because policies and procedures are regularly updated and systems checked out thoroughly. Community cohesion is being promoted satisfactorily although it is not built-in to curriculum planning. Hence, its impact across the socio-economic, religious and ethnic strands is uneven.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

From average levels of knowledge and skills on entry, children make good progress in all areas of learning. Although many boys join with lower level communication skills than the girls, they make good progress and many catch up. The children settle to learning happily because arrangements for them to start school from the 13 pre-school providers are well thought out and ensure the staff have a good understanding of individuals' needs and interests.

Children enthusiastically get down to learning each day because the environment is bright, welcoming and full to the brim with interesting activities. Learning is by topics, which provide a good balance of teacher-directed and independent learning, both in the classroom and outdoors. A wide range of good quality resources enables the children to practise their skills across all areas, with the focus on writing providing good practice in, for example, forming letters. Teaching is generally good, with activities mostly well-matched to children's needs. Their progress is assessed daily to inform the following day's activities. High importance is given to developing children's personal and social skills and their independence. Built-in opportunities allow the children to develop their understanding of keeping safe and healthy, both through daily routines and teaching.

Leadership is effective and regular evaluation ensures continuing development. Pivotal to this is very careful planning and monitoring of learning, which is a particular strength. All of this takes place within a safe, supportive and caring environment.

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

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

Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, almost all said that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe, informs them of their children's progress and enables them to support their children's learning. Most parents and carers agreed with all other responses. Numerous comments were made about a range of issues. They included a small number of concerns about the variable quality of teaching. The inspection team found evidence to support this. The team agreed with several positive comments about the quality of communication, the creative curriculum and the care of the staff towards the pupils. Parents' and carers' comments have been shared with the headteacher, while preserving the anonymity of the writers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at High Oakham 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 160 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 409 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	95	59	61	38	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	109	68	49	31	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	76	48	81	51	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	76	48	74	46	9	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	82	51	72	45	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	42	88	55	4	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	64	40	88	55	6	4	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)	77	48	70	44	8	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	70	44	83	52	2	1	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	64	40	78	49	14	9	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	30	96	60	9	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	87	54	68	43	3	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	55	67	42	4	3	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of High Oakham Primary School, Mansfield, NG18 4SH

On behalf of the inspection team, I thank you for welcoming us into your school, showing us round and making our visit so enjoyable. Thank you, also, to those pupils who met with us to give us their views about the school. With your help, we were able to find out a lot about what you do and learn. We were pleased that you enjoy school, are happy, behave well and that your attendance is above average. We agree that the school has good arrangements in place to keep you safe, and cares for you well. Your parents are also pleased with the school.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. You reach average levels, showing satisfactory progress through the school. Teaching is sound overall and some is good. I have asked the headteacher to help you improve the standards of your work by making sure that all teaching is good. He is going to do this by making sure that your work is always carefully planned, and that you are clear about the purpose of tasks. Some marking is very helpful in telling you what you need to do to improve and I have asked the headteacher to check that all marking is as informative and that you are making progress as fast as you can. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, helped by effective teaching.

The curriculum is good because you learn in interesting ways, often for yourselves both in lessons and after-school activities. We were pleased that you are given lots of chances to take responsibility, which helps you to develop skills that you will need when you are older.

We hope that you will help the school to make these improvements by doing the best you can in everything you do in school.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector

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