

The Hall School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120070
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	363914
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Bearne
Headteacher	Keith Culverwell
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 27 lessons or parts of lessons led by 14 different teachers. They also looked at the work of learning support assistants, including when they were delivering specific educational programmes to small groups of pupils. Meetings were held with staff, governors and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its development plans, records of pupils' attainment and progress, and samples of pupils' work in English and mathematics. They scrutinised 109 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- How successful have the school's strategies been in raising attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2?
- Are support mechanisms, including specialist teaching programmes, successfully accelerating the progress of those pupils who find learning difficult and those who speak English as an additional language?
- Has the school's focus on assessment further improved the quality of teaching and learning?

Information about the school

The school is much larger than most primary schools. Relatively few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, with the largest number being from Indian backgrounds. A small number are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, although an average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school has a wide range of awards, including curriculum awards for information communication technology (ICT) and science, and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This outstanding school provides a very good balance between learning and fun. The outstanding care, guidance and support and excellent role models provided by staff are reflected in the pupils' caring attitudes towards others. Everyone is welcome here and can be successful regardless of their background. Pupils learn to be empathetic and tolerant and they feel exceptionally safe. Consequently pupils blossom into confident, articulate young people whose behaviour is outstanding. They are able to make an exceptional contribution to the school community, not least because of the way that they value each other.

Pupils get off to a good start in the Reception classes, where many exciting activities help the children to make good progress. However, there are not always enough activities that encourage boys to write and this has an impact on their literacy skills. Additionally, it is not always absolutely clear what children are intended to learn from activities that they chose for themselves. Children are supported effectively when they work on specific activities with adults, but their learning is not always as well supported or monitored as rigorously when they work independently.

Pupils from all backgrounds make good, and sometimes excellent, progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 because of good teaching and the outstanding curriculum, which provides a wonderful range of learning opportunities. Attainment is rising and is above average by the end of Key Stage 2. There are examples of outstanding teaching in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 but very occasionally teaching is satisfactory. In these lessons the pace of learning slows and the work set can be relatively easy for average and more-able pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of carefully targeted support that is frequently reviewed in order to ensure that it is always having maximum impact.

The leadership and ambition of the headteacher and deputy have been pivotal to establishing a school where every child is valued and can succeed. Morale is very high and belief in the school's success runs through all levels of staff. The whole staff team, governing body and excellent partnership work make a very important contribution to making certain that this outstanding school continually enhances all aspects of its work. The pursuit of excellence has meant that the school has not only built on previously outstanding performance in key areas such as pupils' personal development, the curriculum and the quality of care, guidance and support, but has also significantly improved pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in English.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the development of boys' literacy skills during their time in the Reception classes by:
 - providing more opportunities that are specifically designed to encourage boys to write
 - ensuring that the activities children choose for themselves always have a very clear purpose, and that children's learning is consistently well supported and monitored when they are working independently.
- Raise the quality of the small amount of satisfactory teaching by ensuring that:
 - learning always moves on at a good pace
 - the work set consistently challenges pupils of all abilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' thirst for learning and their outstanding behaviour make an important contribution to their good progress. They work hard in all their lessons and share a determination to succeed. Attainment in English has risen and an increasing proportion of pupils are reaching the higher level 5 because their writing is technically accurate as well as being interesting and engaging. Pupils make good progress in their mathematics lessons and attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 continues to be above average. Pupils often have the opportunity to work together in lessons. They are able to organise themselves well and are very supportive of each other's work. Skilled learning support assistants are able to successfully reshape teachers' explanations and make certain that those pupils who find learning hard are able to fully understand the concepts that are being taught. They also do sterling work in delivering an extensive range of specialist teaching programmes that are carefully matched to each pupils' individual needs and contribute well to the outstanding progress made by pupils' with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English are also well supported and enabled to make good progress.

Pupils' moral and social development is exceptionally strong and is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils clearly know the difference between right and wrong and develop high levels of self-discipline. This is reflected in the very calm ethos in the school. Pupils are very proud of their school and do all they can to contribute the school community and the local community. This includes belonging to the school council, the Eco Club, and the Wildlife Club as well as volunteering to act as 'Super Leaders' in the playground and raising substantial sums of money for local and national charities. Not only are pupils well informed about health, but they are themselves ambassadors for health. For example, the school council has been involved in enhancing the appeal of school lunches and organising playground games. Additionally pupils are involved in growing vegetables that are used in school lunches. Although pupils have an outstanding range of experiences relating to music, history and art and meet adult visitors from other cultures and religions, their first-hand experience of children from different backgrounds is more limited. Pupils' good basic skills together with good attendance, maturity, self-assurance and the ability to work exceptionally well together means that they are particularly well prepared for their next stage of education.

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

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?

The vast majority of lessons are innovative and exciting and capture pupils' interests well. The school's work on improving the use of assessment has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and has helped to accelerate progress. In most lessons work is very carefully matched to pupils' needs. The level of challenge for more-able pupils has improved and this is reflected in improved attainment and progress in English. Most teachers have very high expectations, nevertheless there are still a small number of satisfactory lessons where the pace of learning is ordinary and the work set is not always demanding enough. Good quality marking has been crucial in developing the quality of pupils' writing. The pioneering project with the high school, where students from the high school mark pieces of pupils' writing, is highly valued by the pupils, who are very keen to implement the advice that is offered.

The school provides many memorable and valuable experiences for its pupils.

While continuing to have a good focus on reading, writing and mathematics, the comprehensive curriculum also ensures that pupils have ample opportunities to develop their skills in ICT and their research skills in science. Links are made seamlessly between subjects and pupils have many opportunities to apply their basic skills in lessons which have exciting subject matter. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to exercise their problems solving skills and practise the use of percentages while learning about how

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stocks and shares work. Regular residential visits help pupils to develop their social skills and independence and a very good range of visits and visitors brings learning to life.

The school provides an extremely welcoming and cheerful environment where pupils feel confident and safe. Very well targeted support, including excellent cooperative working with other agencies, allows each and every pupil to make the very best of the opportunities provided by the school. Outstanding support is offered to pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently many of these pupils make exceptional progress in developing both academic and personal skills. Transition arrangements are outstanding. They ensure that pupils move smoothly through the school and look forward to the next stage of their education.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The ambitious vision and high expectations of the headteacher, governing body and other leaders and managers are underpinned by robust management systems. The careful tracking of pupils' progress and meticulous analysis of data are central to the school's success. If any child is in danger of falling behind, swift and effective action is taken. The way that teachers and managers are organised into key stage teams promotes exceptional teamwork, ensures that less experienced teachers are provided with good support and focuses staff attention closely on the academic progress and personal development of every pupil. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the school is well aware of where further improvements could be made. The monitoring of teaching is comprehensive but judgements on the quality of teaching are occasionally too high and there is sometimes insufficient evidence, particularly about learning, to support the very positive evaluations that are given. The school is very outward looking. Not only does it ensure that partnerships are fully exploited in order to secure the very best education for its own pupils, but it also generously shares its good practice with others on both a local and national level.

Governance is good. The governing body provides the school with effective support and challenge, as well as ensuring statutory requirements are met. Safeguarding procedures are good. The school makes certain that adults who work with children are vetted and works hard to minimise hazards. All pupils and their families are made welcome regardless of their background. The school has precise information about all of the groups it serves and carefully evaluates their progress. Consequently, the school's actions to promote equal opportunities are good. The school's work to promote community cohesion is also

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good. Excellent links with its local community are exemplified by the way the pupils have worked with the local and parish councils on environmental matters. The school teaches pupils to celebrate and value differences and is developing international links. However, links with other schools in the United Kingdom where pupils come from a different range of backgrounds are at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children enter the Reception their personal skills are usually very similar to those expected for their age but many children have literacy skills that are below national expectations. By the time they join Year 1 girls' skills are similar to those expected but boys' skills in linking sounds and letters, reading, writing and calculation are often below national expectations. Nevertheless, children have made good progress from their individual starting points. Staff use a good range of exciting opportunities well to capture children's interest and imagination. Activities that encourage the development of the understanding of number are particularly well thought out, but there are not always sufficient activities that are specifically designed to encourage boys to write. Children make good progress when they are involved in activities that are led by teachers and support staff because staff are good at questioning children and moving their learning on. However, children are not always clear about what they should be learning from activities that they choose for themselves. Additionally, staff are not always vigilant at checking learning when children are working independently and children do not always get timely support. Good leadership and management are exemplified by good teamwork in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Links with parents and carers are good, and they are right to be confident that their children are well cared for.

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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

Parents and carers are very happy with the quality of education offered by the school. Many commented on the outstanding quality of care and good teaching received by their children. Those whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities were especially pleased with the way that their children are supported at school. Many wrote to say how good communication was with teachers, and there was particular praise for the work of the headteacher and deputy. Those parents and carers with older children thought that their children were very well prepared for high school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Hall 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 109 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 416 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	81	20	18	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	90	83	18	17	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	78	72	31	28	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	64	39	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	81	74	27	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	75	69	31	28	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	68	62	38	35	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)	66	61	35	32	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	65	37	34	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	51	46	42	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	51	50	46	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	82	75	26	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	80	21	19	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



12 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Hall School, Leicester, LE3 8PQ

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. All of the team really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. It is clear that you are very proud of your school. No wonder - it is outstanding! You say that your teachers are nice and kind and we agree. They do keep you very safe and value each and every one of you. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and the way that you make such an important contribution to the school. We also thought that you know a lot about how to keep healthy. You all get on very well together and try hard to help each other in lessons.

Teaching in your school is good and this helps you to make good progress. Your standards of attainment are above those reached by children at most other schools. We were very impressed by your writing and I really enjoyed reading your super stories. Some of your lessons are outstanding but in a small number of satisfactory lessons you are set work that is quite easy and you are capable of learning at a faster rate. So we have asked your teachers to improve this. Children in the Reception class have lots of interesting things to do but we have asked your teachers to help boys improve their writing skills by planning writing activities that appeal to boys. We have also asked them to make sure children who are working independently know what they should be learning and get help when it is needed.

The managers at your school are doing an excellent job. They are working very hard and have made your school into one of the very best. You can help your school to improve further by continuing to try very hard in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh

Lead inspector

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