

Heathfields Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124158
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	363974
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Jeremy Spencer HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michelle Trappet
Headteacher	Amanda Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by seven teachers, and one assembly. The inspection team also held meetings with staff, pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and looked at a variety of school documents including policies, minutes of meetings, assessment information about pupils' progress, pupils' exercise books and the school's improvement plans. The inspection team also analysed questionnaire responses from 11 staff and 31 parents and carers.

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

- Are health and safety and safeguarding procedures sufficiently rigorous and do they meet statutory requirements?
- How effective are school leaders in devising, implementing and monitoring plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning?
- Do lessons run at an appropriate pace and do teachers challenge and meet the needs of all groups of pupils?
- How successful have the school's strategies been to improve pupils' achievement and their attendance?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized infant school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that of most schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in two Reception classes. The majority of children join Reception from the on-site pre-school setting which is privately managed and subject to a separate inspection. A daily breakfast club runs on the school site and this is managed by the governing body.

The school was last inspected in June 2010 and received a notice to improve. Significant improvement was required in order to meet fully requirements for pupils' health and safety and the statutory requirements for safeguarding.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school's drive for improvement since its previous inspection has included periods of steady progress but also times when this has stalled. Despite improvements made to the school's safeguarding procedures, which now meet statutory requirements, and within the Early Years Foundation Stage, senior leaders have failed to agree and prioritise the best strategies to take the school forward and raise pupils' attainment. This has caused confusion amongst staff and the lack of clear direction and guidance from the leaders of the school has led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. The teaching is mainly satisfactory with pockets of good practice. However, the leadership team has not been ambitious enough in recent years to develop enough good practice to accelerate pupils' learning and build on the good start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Consequently, pupils' experiences in different classes in Years 1 and 2 have been uneven and the pace of learning inconsistent. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 1, particularly in reading and writing, is too low. For too many pupils, progress since joining the school has been inadequate. Pupils' low attendance levels over recent years have further hindered their progress.

Despite this, the school has a number of significant strengths. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress from their starting points. Across the school, relationships between adults and pupils are good and pupils are well cared for and feel safe. Pupils demonstrate good moral development and they behave well in lessons and around the school. The school works hard to engage parents and carers and the local community, and almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire did so positively.

The governing body cares deeply about the school and is open and honest in the evaluation of its performance. However, its members have not managed to ensure that weaknesses in leadership and management are addressed, particularly in developing more good teaching across the school. This, combined with the school's weak track record in improving pupils' achievement, means that the school has inadequate capacity to sustain further improvement.

Although there is some good teaching which helps pupils to progress well, there is too much that is just satisfactory. This means that pupils are not making up for their previous underachievement. In the best lessons, teachers continually assess the progress of pupils, identifying and addressing misconceptions swiftly and effectively. They are also aware

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when pupils require further challenge and plan the next steps of learning to meet their needs. The level of pace and challenge for each pupil in these lessons is, therefore, just right and ensures good or better progress. However, these positive features are not sufficiently well embedded in lessons across the school to accelerate pupils' learning. Leaders have not implemented effective strategies, nor adopted appropriate training or professional development for teachers, to improve ways in which pupils are taught letters and sounds (phonics). Pupils have not been taught consistent methods to develop their vocabulary to fully understand what they read (comprehension), or improved their confidence and skills in writing. This has hampered the progress made in developing pupils' confidence in reading and writing and accounts for their low attainment.

The school's systems for sharing good practice in teaching have not been successful in removing inconsistencies across the school quickly enough. This is due to ineffective leadership and management. Not all subject leaders contribute to the school's evaluation of its progress. Consequently, the school's understanding of teachers' and pupils' performance, and the strategies used to drive improvement are inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing ambition and driving improvement by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders adopt a clear, united and consistent approach to all aspects of school improvement
 - developing the knowledge and skills of the governing body to enable closer scrutiny of the school's work, so that weaknesses and inconsistencies are resolved
 - developing the role of subject leaders in order to improve the quality of self-evaluation and extend opportunities to model good practice.
- Raise pupils' levels of attainment in reading and writing and accelerate the rate of their learning and progress by:
 - ensuring greater consistency and quality in the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics), reading (comprehension) and writing
 - improving pupils' attendance levels to at least the national average.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all classes by:
 - ensuring that teachers swiftly identify, within lessons, when pupils are ready for the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring teachers' marking and feedback clearly identifies the next steps pupils need to take in their learning in order to improve
 - sharing best practice to eliminate inconsistencies between classes in the pace of learning and the level of challenge provided to pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Children begin in the school's Reception classes demonstrating skills that are below those normally expected for their age and make good progress, particularly in the development of their personal, social and emotional skills. As pupils move through Key Stage 1, the school's assessment data and inspectors' scrutiny of their work in exercise books show that pupils' achievement is inadequate. This is because there are inconsistencies in the teaching of reading and writing. Progress in English has been weaker than in mathematics as phonics and writing are not taught consistently enough across the school. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is significantly lower than expected levels in reading and writing. Although attainment in mathematics is just below average, it is higher than in reading and writing, so that pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because teachers planning meets their needs increasingly well and pupils receive appropriate support from teaching assistants.

Pupils are aware of the importance of healthy eating and the need to exercise regularly. Exercise-related after-school clubs are well attended and pupils choose to be physically active at playtimes. They make a satisfactory contribution to the smooth running of the school, for example, through the school council and the 'eco-group'. They also make satisfactory links with the wider community, including taking part in singing at the local church. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They demonstrate good spiritual awareness during moments of reflection in school assemblies and within lessons. Their good moral and social development is evident in their positive relationships with each other and in their good behaviour. Pupils are becoming increasingly aware of the cultural diversity of our society due to improvements in the school's curriculum and the opportunities they have to learn about different cultures and traditions.

The high percentage of pupils with low attendance levels and the low attainment of learners means that too many pupils are inadequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
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?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good or better teaching within the school. During the inspection no inadequate lessons were seen. While there is evidence of good lessons, their positive features are not sufficiently widespread or embedded throughout the school. Good support is provided by teaching assistants, and they contribute well to pupils' engagement in learning, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Teachers use assessment information about pupils' learning and progress to plan lessons. The most effective teaching is more ambitious and uses assessment well to provide work and tasks that meet the needs and abilities of all pupils. However, on some occasions higher-attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and they spend too long completing repetitive work, which slows down their progress. The school has implemented a new marking policy and in some classes teachers' written comments and verbal feedback are clear, constructive and linked to the identified learning objectives. However, this is not consistent in all classes and too often guidance towards the next steps in pupils' learning is unclear.

The school has worked effectively with a local junior school to design and implement a curriculum which offers frequent opportunities to develop pupils' creativity. The curriculum is supported by a broad range of school trips and visitors to the school. However, opportunities to develop and apply pupils' mathematical and information and

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communication technology skills in other subjects are limited. There are also inconsistencies between classes in the teaching of the school's phonics and writing programmes. The revised curriculum has good features but is not yet making a strong enough contribution to the improved development of pupils' basic reading and writing skills, because of inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics and writing.

The school provides good support for pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable: their emotional and social needs are met well. However, despite implementing a number of strategies, the school has been unsuccessful in guiding and supporting some families to help improve their children's attendance.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

All senior leaders recognise the need to improve pupils' achievement. However, they do not demonstrate a focused, united and consistent approach to their work. Consequently, these leaders are having a limited impact on securing the school's improvement.

Governance is inadequate. The governing body is supportive, but its members do not demonstrate the necessary skills or confidence to overcome the inherent weaknesses in leadership and management, which are blocking further improvements to teaching and to pupils' outcomes.

The school has a satisfactory action plan for promoting community cohesion. Consequently, the school is a cohesive and harmonious community. However, leaders acknowledge that the evaluation of the school's work in this area is underdeveloped. The school has detailed information about the different groups of pupils it serves, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, and tracks the progress of all pupils in different subjects. The school is successful in tackling discrimination and there is evidence of improved outcomes for some groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers have worked hard to engage parents and carers. This has led to the provision of well-targeted activities to support them, including 'family learning' sessions to develop basic skills. These sessions have had a proven impact on accelerated progress for some pupils, particularly for those who find learning difficult. Partnerships with a local junior school have supported improvements to the school's satisfactory curriculum. A number of other partnerships support the health and well-being of pupils, including partnerships with the local children's centre and a local professional football club. However, partnership activity with the local authority has not adequately raised the overall achievement of pupils or improved the quality of leadership and management quickly enough.

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Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. There has been adequate training and staff are clear about their responsibilities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

In the school's Reception classes, teachers plan engaging learning activities that enable children to make good progress from their starting points. For example, during the inspection, children were completely engaged in an outstanding lesson designed to reinforce their understanding of syllables. The class teacher skilfully combined topic work linked to animals and insects with the opportunity for each child to play a recorder to sound out syllables in the lesson. They made very good progress as a result.

Children have good relationships with adults and well-established routines enable the children to respond with confidence to all that is on offer. Teachers make effective use of the improved outdoor learning area and stimulating indoor learning environments and resources. Teachers and other staff use observations and assessments effectively to support and extend children's learning and to identify areas for improvement.

Good leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage on a day-to-day basis have ensured that a consistent approach has been adopted across both Reception classes. This has underpinned the improvements made since the last inspection, although the leadership of the school has not done enough to build this good practice into Year 1.

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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

Almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires have a positive view of the school and are happy with their children's experience. One parent commented, 'Heathfields is a lovely school with lots of friendly and caring staff. My child is very happy to come to school each day.' Other parents and carers made similar comments. A small number raised individual concerns. All of these were considered during the inspection and, while preserving anonymity, discussed with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heathfields 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 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 170 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	65	11	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	58	13	42	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	39	19	61	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	42	17	55	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	48	15	48	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	39	18	58	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	35	18	58	1	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)	15	48	16	52	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	52	14	45	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	42	16	52	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	39	17	55	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	45	16	52	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	55	13	42	1	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	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.



30 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heathfields Infant School, Wilnecote, B77 5LU

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. We would like to thank your parents and carers for filling in the questionnaires which gave us their views about your school. There are some good things about the school. The children in the Reception classes are doing really well. You behave well across the whole school and get on very well with each other. You also know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and keep safe. You told us there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem. The school works well with other people in your local community.

While there are some good things, overall the school is not doing well enough to make sure you all learn and do as well as you can. We have judged that the school requires 'special measures' because it needs help to make improvements quickly. This means that inspectors will visit the school regularly to check how well it is doing. In the meantime, we have asked the headteacher, staff and the governing body to do a number of things to help it improve. We have asked them to:

- work more closely together and share ideas and skills more effectively to improve the school
- work harder with families to make sure that children come to school more often
- make sure that the teaching always helps you to make good progress, especially in reading and writing
- look at your work more closely and more often in lessons, to make sure that it is at just the right level for all of you
- explain more clearly how you can improve your work.

You can all help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in all that you do and coming to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer

Her Majesty's Inspector

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