

Heron Cross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124003
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	380772
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2012
Lead inspector	Alan Parkinson

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	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Whitehead
Headteacher	Dorrie Shenton
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alan Parkinson
Kathleen McArthur
David Byrne

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed nine teachers and visited 14 lessons. Meetings were held with three groups of pupils, two members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation evidence, the school development plan, internal and external pupil progress data, attendance data, documentation relating to safeguarding and child protection, pupil workbooks and observed the school's work. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, analysed 72 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as those returned by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This is a slightly larger than average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average. Of these, the proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average. The school accommodates a Key Stage 1 and a Key Stage 2 speech and language resource provision for pupils from across the authority. This provision is centrally managed by Stoke local authority and is subject to a separate inspection. No pupils, who are on the roll of the school, attend this provision. The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards for attainment and progress expected by the government. In 2011, the school achieved the International Fine Arts Award and the Eduspace Parent Support Award.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. The school has some strong features, especially the development of a more imaginative curriculum, which is motivating pupils to work hard. This is not an outstanding school because while teaching is good overall, some teaching is satisfactory and there are a few gaps in the performance between different groups of pupils compared with national averages.
- Pupils’ achievement overall is good. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress across all areas of learning because of the good quality teaching that they receive. This continues throughout Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 where pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The overall quality of teaching is good because most teachers motivate pupils and provide opportunities for them to succeed. The leadership of teaching is effective. In literacy and numeracy, teachers rigorous marking of pupils’ work show the next steps for pupils to take to enable them to improve, but this practice is not yet fully embedded into all other subjects.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and the vast majority of parents and carers support this view. This is a very inclusive school. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other and to staff and visitors.
- The school’s senior leaders and the governing body have high expectations. They have a clear vision for further school improvement which is based upon accurate school self-evaluation and is shared by all staff. The curriculum interests pupils and promotes positive attitudes among pupils towards their learning and supports their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although the school has a well-established system in place to monitor pupils’ progress, it does not always ensure any dip in a pupil’s performance is addressed swiftly enough to enable all pupils to consistently perform as well as their peers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better by:
 - increasing the frequency of progress reviews to eradicate any remaining gaps in attainment
 - extending the good practice in assessment procedures in literacy and numeracy to all other subjects across the school
 - increasing assessment opportunities to identify any pupils whose rate of progress slows and apply intervention strategies earlier.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge well below those that are typical for their age in all areas of development, especially in their language skills. Good provision in all areas of learning enables them to progress well in both Nursery and Reception classes. By the end of Reception their skills are just below that typically expected for their age across all areas of learning although language skills still lag behind. Evidence shows that overall children make good progress with some making excellent progress, especially in personal, social and emotional development.

In Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress and the gap with national averages is rapidly closing. An emphasis on improving pupils' reading skills is successfully raising pupils' attainment in reading. Although overall attainment levels in reading remain below average at Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrate a clear enjoyment of reading. The majority of pupils take books home and a number said that they read with their parents/carers and that their favourite stories are traditional tales.

Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 2. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is broadly in line with national averages. By the end of Year 6 pupils' reading is broadly average for all pupil groups. Pupils read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction which supports their learning across the curriculum. Parents and carers are accurate in their positive views that their child is making good progress. Most pupils achieve well, however, there are still a few gaps in performance between different pupil groups and their national averages. There is not a consistent pattern across the school or across different subjects. The school identified that a few girls were not progressing as well as other pupils in a few classes. Although the school took positive action to address this, it was not done swiftly enough to ensure their pace of learning did not slow. Effective provision and support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensure that they make good progress.

Quality of teaching

Good teaching and learning are evident in most lessons and promote good application of basic skills and development of problem-solving skills. For example, in a mathematics lesson pupils collaborated well when working in small groups to solve problems relating to creating a menu for a pizza. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is a strong focus on language development. Good teaching, based on secure knowledge of the Early Years Foundation

Stage requirements, with well-linked activities enables children to make good progress. The stimulating learning environment and good use of the outdoor area supports their learning and reflects the indoor curriculum.

Art is a strength of the school. It is used widely in displays around the school and complements learning. The high quality classroom displays and those around the school create a stimulating and inspiring learning environment. Lively and imaginative teaching, based on strong subject knowledge and the creative curriculum, promotes pupils' positive attitudes to learning and provides opportunities to develop skills in reading, writing and also in other subjects. Pupils enjoy lessons and school trips and typically say: 'We go to places we've never been before like the seaside', and, 'the teachers are the best you can find!' Classroom assistants are effectively deployed and feel well equipped to carry out their roles. They make a significant contribution to the learning of pupils including those with special educational needs and those identified by the school for additional support.

Although most of the teaching is of good quality, a few lessons are less effective because assessment opportunities are not always used as effectively to identify any pupils who are not performing as well as expected. As a result, the pace of learning for a few pupils slows on occasion. Pupils understand through 'next steps' how to improve their learning, particularly in literacy and numeracy. However, pupils are not always so clear about how to improve their work further in other subjects. The vast majority of parents and carers believe that their children are taught well and inspection evidence supports this view.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Children quickly feel safe and secure due to the good quality care and welfare arrangements. The school takes account of pupils' views. For example, following pupil suggestions through the school council, more equipment has been provided on the playground.

Attendance is above average compared to the national average due to the school's positive actions that contribute significantly to keeping up the expectations for regular attendance and offers strong support to families and pupils. This high rate of attendance reflects well on pupils' very positive attitudes towards their learning, enjoyment and engagement in school.

Pupils clearly understand the school's behaviour management system. It is seen as fair and supports pupils' personal and social skills well and helps them develop very positive views of teaching and learning. Pupils value the 'golden rules' and say that these have helped to improve behaviour. The small minority of pupils with behavioural issues are very well managed by a consistently applied behaviour system. Responses to parental questionnaires indicate that the majority of parents and carers feel behaviour is good but some are concerned that it can hinder learning. The recent improvements in behaviour strategies enable the large majority of pupils to learn at a good level. Pupils are respectful to each other and to adults. Pupils say that bullying is not a big issue and that if bullying does occur they feel they can go to a teacher to talk about it and it gets dealt with.

The pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well cared for and give an impression of receiving positive guidance from support staff. All are enthusiastic to do better and value what the school gives them.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is utterly committed and determined to continually improve pupils' personal, social and academic development. Senior staff have a clear vision with high expectations, which is shared by all staff. Governance is good. Leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, monitor the work of the school and plan effectively. School self-evaluation is accurate. As a result, the priorities in the school development plan focus clearly on raising standards further. The proactive governing body actively monitors the implementation of all school policies. Although school leaders carefully monitor pupils' progress, they do not always ensure pupils' progress is reviewed frequently enough in all classes. This has led to a few inconsistencies in rates of progress.

The well-planned and well-resourced curriculum is based on stories and books, provides a vibrant learning environment and promotes pupils' personal, social and academic development well. It provides very stimulating learning experiences, especially for boys, and has a significant impact on their progress. One governor said, 'The school brings the world alive for the children'. Through a variety of enrichment activities such as the science day and mathematics afternoon, the school has developed effective relationships and engages well with parents and carers resulting in positive support for learning at home and raised aspirations for their children. The development of the curriculum and the recent involvement of all staff in the school's self-evaluation processes demonstrate the school's good capacity for continuing to improve.

School assemblies are vibrant and provide a strong contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They promote thought and deepen pupils' ambition to achieve through the 'I can' principle. Pupils demonstrate respect and dignity. The school is very inclusive and promotes equality of opportunity well and tackles discrimination effectively on the rare occasions it may occur. Safeguarding and child protection procedures and policies meet national requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heron Cross Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 4LJ

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us at lunchtime.

Heron Cross is a good school. You feel safe in school and your behaviour and attitudes towards learning are good and your attendance is high. Teaching is good but we have asked your school to make your lessons even better. We have asked your teachers to keep a careful check on what you are learning in all your subjects so that they can help you more quickly overcome any problems with your work.

The curriculum you follow is very good and helps you improve your reading and writing skills. The school promotes your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Activities such as assemblies, the science day and mathematics afternoon enable your parents to share in your learning and make it even more interesting and enjoyable. I hope you keep on working hard so you can help to make your school even better.

Thank you again for your contribution to the inspection and for your kindness and courtesy to us. We wish all of you the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Parkinson
Lead inspector

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