



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

**Inspection report**  
**Huncote Primary School**

**Leicestershire Education Authority**

Dates of inspection: 1 and 2 November 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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## Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Huncote Community Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Miss S Powis
Address of school:	Denman Lane Huncote Leicester Leicestershire LE9 3BS
Telephone:	0116 286 4105
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mrs J Williams
Local education authority area:	Leicestershire
Unique reference number:	119979
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr P Brooker HMI
Dates of inspection:	1 and 2 November 2004

## Introduction

1. Huncote Community Primary School is located in the village of Huncote, to the west of Leicester. It is smaller than average, with 141 pupils on roll, two of whom are of white/Asian heritage. At ten per cent, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Thirty seven pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, a proportion that is broadly in line with national average figures. One pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Need.
2. The school was inspected in September 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.
3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the areas for improvement from the inspection of September 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on two occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In November 2004, two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of September 2003.

## Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:
  - the ability profile of pupils when they enter the school is broadly average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although the legacy of uneven teaching has left gaps in the pupils' basic skills;
  - taken over time, standards of attainment are broadly average. Most pupils in the Foundation Stage achieve the Early Learning Goals for five-year-olds. In national tests for seven-year-olds in 2004, the proportion of pupils who achieved at least the expected Level 2 and higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics was below or well below the national average;
  - results in the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests have shown a steady upward trend in recent years and are now broadly in line with those seen nationally. In the most recent tests in 2004 the average points score increased in each subject compared with 2003;
  - the pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, although their progress in Key Stage 2 is uneven;
  - the pupils make sound progress in lessons. The quality of learning was satisfactory in almost all lessons and good or very good in over half. However,

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there remains a wide variation between the most lively and challenging lessons and those where the pace of learning is pedestrian;

- the quality of teaching is good overall. It was at least satisfactory in all lessons, including six that were good, three very good and one excellent. A significant proportion of teaching is consistently good or very good. There remain some weaknesses in teaching, even in lessons that are satisfactory overall;
- the curriculum is broad and includes all the required subjects in reasonable depth and balance. The school provides a range of extracurricular opportunities, including trips and visiting speakers, to extend and enrich the pupils' experiences;
- suitable systems have been developed to assess and monitor the pupils' progress. Assessment is sound overall with notable strengths. Systems for setting targets have developed appropriately. However, assessment data is not effectively used to inform teaching or to ensure that higher-attaining pupils are extended sufficiently;
- the pupils are very well behaved and demonstrate mature and sensible attitudes. They are friendly and polite, and interact sensibly. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves. Attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in all lessons and good or very good in three quarters. Pupils of all ages take an interest in their work and sustain their concentration well;
- attendance and punctuality are very good. At 95.8 per cent for the last school year and 97.2 per cent this term, levels of attendance are well above the national average. There is no unauthorised absence;
- the school has a very positive ethos. Support and guidance for the pupils are very good. There is very good provision for the pupils' moral and social development; their spiritual and cultural development is good;
- the headteacher provides very good leadership and management for the school. She articulates a clear vision for its future and has worked decisively and determinedly to implement the necessary changes quickly. The headteacher has skilfully developed the school's leadership capacity and the management skills of staff at all levels;
- the quality of curriculum leadership and management has improved significantly since the last inspection. The responsibilities of subject leaders have developed appropriately. However, the effectiveness of subject leadership is too variable;
- the roles and responsibilities of the governing body have been suitably developed. Governors are well informed and are confident in holding the school to account;

- support from the local education authority (LEA) has been well focused and effective. The LEA has provided good advice and guidance for the governing body and for curriculum development.

## Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- further improve pupils' rates of progress and raise standards of attainment;
- continue to develop the effectiveness of subject leadership.

## Inspection findings

### Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The ability profile of pupils on entry varies from year to year. Viewed over time it is broadly average. In general, standards of attainment are close to those expected for the age of the pupils.

8. The pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of learning and most achieve the Early Learning Goals for five-year-olds. In recent years, standards of attainment in end-of-Key Stage 1 tests have been broadly at or above those seen nationally. However, results in 2004 declined compared with the previous year and were below national average figures: average points scores were below the national figure in writing and well below average in reading and in mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 and higher Level 3 was below or well below the national average in all subjects, and well below those of similar schools. Procedures for assessing the pupils' standards and progress are now robust and accurate, but standards of attainment in 2004 tests were unacceptably low.

9. Results in the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests have shown a steady upward trend in recent years and are broadly in line with those seen nationally. In the most recent tests in 2004 the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 in each subject declined compared with the previous year, but there was a significant increase in the proportion who achieved the higher Level 5. The average points score increased in each subject in 2004. When compared with schools with similar prior attainment in Key Stage 1, standards were well below average. However, an analysis of matched data indicates that the pupils made satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2.

10. The pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. The quality of learning was satisfactory in almost all lessons and good or very good in over half. However, there remains a wide variation between the most lively and challenging lessons and those where the pace of learning is pedestrian. The pupils made good progress when teaching was dynamic and well directed, but the quality of learning in one lesson was unsatisfactory when teaching lacked pace or challenge. Taken over time, achievement is satisfactory overall. The pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage, but the legacy of uneven teaching elsewhere in Key Stages 1 and 2 has left gaps in basic skills, notably amongst older

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pupils. In general the pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress, although their rates of progress in Key Stage 2 are variable.

11. Standards in literacy are sound overall, although pockets of low achievement persist, notably amongst boys in Year 3. Pupils of all ages listen well to their teacher and to their classmates in order to develop their speaking and listening skills. However, some weaknesses in writing and spelling are linked with local pronunciation and idioms. Furthermore, many pupils have a limited vocabulary. The pupils make satisfactory progress in English lessons. Foundation Stage pupils make good progress in developing skills in communication, language and literacy; oracy, reading and writing skills are well founded in reception and Year 1. Younger pupils develop confidence in speaking at length and have a basic understanding of the link between letters and sounds. The pupils in Year 2 write simple sentences and punctuate their work with reasonable accuracy. In a Year 3 literacy lesson some pupils used prefixes and suffixes accurately, but weak vocabulary constrained their overall progress. Year 4 pupils were confident in their use of adjectives and applied this skill well to create a poem. The Year 5 class used their persuasive writing skills to enter a local competition and requested help in transforming their school grounds. Winning the competition was a positive experience for the pupils and demonstrated the effectiveness of writing for a specific purpose. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to adapt their writing for different audiences, and are given some good opportunities to develop their writing in different subjects. Year 6 pupils produced good river poems in geography.

12. Standards in mathematics lessons are close to those that might be expected for the age of the pupils. However, the school's analysis indicates wide variation in basic numeracy across different year groups. The pupils make at least sound and often good progress in mathematics lessons. They make a very good start in the reception and Year 1 class and thoroughly enjoy their numeracy work. Younger pupils learn to count and sort sets of objects and recognise numbers to ten, and numeracy is skilfully included in other aspects of learning so that mathematical vocabulary and number skills are routinely reinforced. Pupils in Year 2 have a secure understanding of place value and used number squares and number lines to add and subtract numbers accurately; higher-attaining pupils have well developed skills in mental mathematics. Standards of numeracy are uneven in Key Stage 2. Many pupils in Year 3 have an insecure understanding of mathematical vocabulary and basic calculation. Year 4 pupils selected and applied a variety of appropriate calculation methods in sorting polygons. Most Year 6 pupils worked with reasonable accuracy in simplifying fractions and improper fractions; higher-attaining pupils confidently converted percentages, decimals and fractions.

13. Standards in science are improving throughout the school and the pupils make satisfactory progress overall. In the Foundation Stage the pupils use a range of resources to undertake simple scientific investigations and learn about their world. They test, sort and record their findings and demonstrate good observational skills. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have a basic understanding of the steps in scientific enquiry and the need for fair testing, and are able to make predictions to guide their investigations. Year 4 pupils were given good responsibility for designing their own scientific investigations, for example in testing how quickly objects fall, or how much force is needed to move an object over different surfaces; they made sensible predictions and evaluated their findings. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a sound understanding of basic scientific processes, but their recall of key vocabulary and prior learning is not secure.

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14. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are rising but are below age-related expectations, particularly for older pupils. A newly installed computer suite has significantly improved access to ICT and enables pupils to make good progress in ICT lessons. A significant number of pupils are inexperienced in applying ICT to their learning: for instance, only a minority of Year 5 pupils could use a search engine to research their chosen topics. Some examples of good ICT work are displayed around the school, and demonstrate the increasing use of ICT and the contribution that it makes to the pupils' broader learning.

### **The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

15. The pupils are very well behaved and demonstrate mature and sensible attitudes. Around the school, during break periods, in assembly and in the lunch hall they were friendly and polite, and showed consideration for others. Attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in all lessons and good, very good or excellent in three quarters. Most pupils settled quickly to their tasks and responded eagerly when work was interesting and well paced. Pupils of all ages take an interest in their work and sustain their concentration well, and they co-operated well in pairs and small groups. When the pace of learning was slow, the pupils were patient and compliant, and most stayed on task, even when asked to listen for extended periods of time. A few individuals presented challenging behaviour, but they were well managed, and their inattentiveness did not distract others.

16. The school has a very positive ethos. There are clear routines and effective strategies to promote the pupils' personal development. Support and guidance for the pupils are very good. The school is calm and well ordered: the pupils line up promptly and quietly at the end of break and lunchtimes; they move around sensibly; and they are quick to settle at the start of lessons and assemblies. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves. The school has good strategies to develop the pupils' sense of responsibility, to raise their self-esteem and to encourage caring attitudes. Teachers model the behaviour they expect and promote responsible attitudes. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 a comprehensive range of duties is very well understood by the pupils. They take pride in carrying out one of ten allocated roles, which range from table and fruit monitors to 'special helpers'. An imaginative range of whole-school responsibilities is available to older pupils. These include the roles of school gardener, junior assistant premises officers and assembly technicians. Pupils' names and roles are prominently displayed in the school's foyer. The school council has an active role in decision-making; pupils have been involved in the purchase of a 'buddy bench' for the playground which is used to encourage them to support each other through discussion and play.

17. There is very good provision for the pupils' moral and social development; their spiritual and cultural development is good. The school has made good progress in extending the range of opportunities to develop cultural awareness; for instance, the pupils study artists from different cultures as part of their art curriculum, and Year 3 and 4 pupils were involved in planning a visit to a synagogue. The school is attentive in recognising and celebrating individual and collective achievements of all sorts. The use of the birthday board and assembly announcements signifies that all individuals are valued. The school exploits a range of opportunities to promote different experiences for the pupils. It has recently been successful in two local competitions. These have led to the acquisition of a compost bin, and to adaptations to the external environment of the school. The pupils are enthusiastic and

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proud of their achievements. A recent initiative to 'learn something new' encouraged the pupils and staff to learn new skills and grow in self-confidence.

18. The excellent displays are a strength of the school. These include high quality art work in the style of famous artists such as Cezanne and Picasso, clay fish, self-portraits and Celtic designs, as well as resources to support the pupils' learning. These exhibits and examples of work create a positive learning environment and contribute powerfully to building the pupils' self-esteem. A new mural painted by a teaching assistant is a stimulating resource and brightens the Foundation Stage area.

19. Attendance and punctuality are very good. At 95.8 per cent for the last school year and 97.2 per cent this term, levels of attendance are well above the national average. There is no unauthorised absence.

### **The quality of education**

20. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the inspection in 2003 and is good overall. It was at least satisfactory in all lessons, including six where it was good, three very good and one excellent. A significant proportion of teaching is consistently good or very good. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is excellent.

21. In all lessons there was a settled climate for learning, there were positive relationships between adults and pupils, and the pupils were well managed. Work was well planned, carefully prepared and clearly explained; teaching was suitably structured; independent work was well considered and well organised. In general there was a suitable range of learning activities and an appropriate balance of teacher input and independent tasks. Short-term planning provided for a suitable challenge for most pupils. Teaching assistants provided good support for individual pupils and small groups, particularly in art and design work. However, when learning intentions were not clear or were not well differentiated, work occasionally lacked sufficient challenge.

22. In the best lessons, excellent routines ensured that time was very well used and that all the pupils were engaged in learning. In these lessons the teachers sustained high expectations of the pupils' involvement and of the quality and quantity of their work, and teaching assistants played a full role in supporting and promoting learning. The teacher's enthusiasm captured the pupils' imagination, ensuring that they all concentrated and that they were motivated to work hard. In the Foundation Stage lessons skilful questioning ensured that prior learning was well reviewed, that the pupils were clear what to do and that their understanding was assessed at different points of the lesson.

23. There remain some weaknesses in teaching, even in lessons that were satisfactory overall. Although the lessons were suitably planned, they lacked sufficient pace to challenge all pupils in the group. The teacher's exposition was sometimes lengthy and questioning was weak, and many pupils were passive for too long. In one lesson, ineffective management of class discussion constrained the progress that pupils could make.

24. The curriculum has improved significantly since the inspection in 2003 and is satisfactory. It is broad and includes all the required subjects in reasonable depth and balance. The curriculum map has been reviewed and staff have worked hard to make suitable revisions to schemes of work. Revision of the religious education and science curriculum has been well supported by LEA's advisers. The library has been reorganised to ensure that

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resources better support the pupils' learning, and the recent installation of a computer suite helps to ensure that provision for ICT is sound. The school provides a range of extracurricular opportunities, including trips and visiting speakers, to extend and enrich the pupils' experiences.

25. Suitable systems have been developed to assess and monitor the pupils' progress. Assessment is sound overall and is good in several classes. Recent training on assessment is beginning to have an impact on classroom practice and several strategies are routinely used to gauge the pupils' progress in lessons.

26. Assessment data is better used than previously to track pupils' progress and to diagnose areas of weakness. The school's analysis of test results and papers has identified priorities for action in literacy, numeracy and science, and is used for setting targets and arranging specific intervention and support. The school has a reasonable overview of the pupils' progress, but assessment information is underused in short-term planning to present suitable challenge for pupils with different abilities. Medium term planning and lesson plans do not have sufficient clarity in defining suitably challenging learning outcomes; those for higher-attaining pupils are not consistently ambitious.

27. Systems for setting targets have developed appropriately. The pupils have individual targets for literacy and numeracy and are familiar with these. The targets are reviewed regularly and teachers are beginning to make better use of them in lessons in order to guide improvement. A policy for marking and feedback has been introduced; the quality of marking has improved and is sound overall. The best is diagnostic and outlines specific areas for improvement. The school has introduced a new procedure for correcting the pupils' work and guiding their next steps. The highlighting system is understood by the pupils and requires them to act on the guidance given. The pupils have responded positively to these more detailed written comments. However, marking needs to link more closely with individual targets.

28. The school communicates very well with parents in order to keep them informed about developments and to secure their support for their children's learning. Two parents' groups provide good support for the school.

### **Leadership and management**

29. The headteacher provides very good leadership and management for the school. She articulates a clear vision for the future and has worked decisively and determinedly to implement the necessary changes quickly. In securing these developments the headteacher has carefully balanced the need for both rapid change and sustainable improvement. She has skilfully involved all partners in key changes and delegated carefully in order to build leadership capacity. Consequently staff and governors have been fully engaged in the process of school improvement and the developments have been firmly rooted. Concise and clear policies have been drawn up in consultation with staff and governors. These have underpinned developments and are used to review and evaluate progress. Staff have a clear understanding of their particular responsibilities, and are well supported in discharging these. There are effective systems for monitoring the school's improvement, and the school has the capacity for self-evaluation and is able to guide its own development.

30. The management and leadership roles of staff at all levels have been extended. The senior management team is cohesive and effective. The assistant headteacher supports the

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headteacher well and makes good use of thorough statistical analysis to guide and monitor the work of the school. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and effectively monitors the pupils' progress.

31. Curriculum leadership and management have improved significantly since the last inspection. The responsibilities of subject leaders have been appropriately extended: curriculum developments are guided by subject action plans; and there are systems for monitoring standards and pupils' progress, including lesson observations and scrutinies of pupils' work. However, curriculum management is at an early stage of development and the quality of subject leadership is too variable. The most effective leaders have a detailed understanding of standards in their subjects across the school and they guide developments and evaluate the impact of initiatives. However, too much subject leadership is reliant on external evaluation and support and is not yet sufficiently analytical or effective in leading improvement.

32. The governing body is well organised and provides good support for the school. The roles and responsibilities of the governing body have been suitably developed. Clear communication, more effective meetings and an increased number of visits by governors have ensured that the governing body is well informed and is confident in holding the school to account.

33. The LEA's support has been well focused and effective. The school values the challenge and guidance provided by the link adviser. The LEA's support for the governing body and for curriculum development has been well judged.

### **Implementation of the action plan**

34. The inspection report of September 2003 required the school to address five areas for improvement. These principally related to raising standards, and to improving the quality of teaching, leadership and management, assessment and the curriculum. The school has implemented each of the tasks set out in its action plan and has made good progress overall in making improvements. However, there has been no significant increase in standards. There remains work to be done to accelerate pupils' rates of progress and to raise their standards of attainment.

35. The school's leadership and governance have improved significantly and are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and management for the school and has strengthened the management roles of key staff. The senior management team is cohesive. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and standards have been established and responsibilities have been sensibly delegated. The roles and responsibilities of the governors have been suitably developed. The governing body is better informed and governors are more confident in holding the school to account.

36. The overall quality of teaching has improved greatly. A significant proportion of teaching is consistently good or very good. Teaching assistants provide sound and often good support for individual pupils and small groups. The curriculum map has been reviewed and staff have worked hard to make suitable revisions to schemes of work.

37. Systems for assessing the pupils' progress have been strengthened. Assessment data is better used to track pupils' progress and to diagnose areas of weakness. Subject

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co-ordinators analyse test results to inform curriculum development and to target specific support.

38. As a result of the LEA's guidance and support and the efforts of the staff, the school now has the capacity to evaluate its own performance and to guide its future development.

## **Appendix – Information about the inspection**

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in September 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in March and June 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of September 2003.

In November 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Sixteen lessons or parts of lessons, two assemblies and two registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other nominated staff and a representative of the LEA; informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of September 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.