



Helpringham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 120379
LEA Lincolnshire

Inspection number 274765
Inspection date 20 June 2005
Reporting inspector Keith Edwards

Inspection deemed to have been carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 according to section 12(3) of the same act.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Highgate
School category	Community		Helpringham
Age range of pupils	4 - 11		Sleaford
			Lincolnshire
			NG34 0RD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01529 421676
Number on roll	149	Fax number	01529 421676
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Geoff Hotchkin
Date of previous inspection	15 September 2003	Headteacher	Mrs Penny Wetton

Age group	Published	Reference no.
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Introduction

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of Helpringham Primary School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. During this inspection all of the junior pupils were visiting a science park to support their learning.

Description of the school

The school serves the rural community of Helpringham and surrounding district. Many of the children are bussed into school each day. There are 149 girls and boys on roll who are taught in five classes. All of the pupils are white and come from homes where English is the first language. Socio-economic circumstances are favourable for most families. The number of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average. A higher than average number of pupils is not at the school for the whole of their primary education, joining and leaving at other than the usual times. Three children are from traveller families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is similar to most schools, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is higher.

The school was placed in the serious weakness category when it was last inspected in September 2003. This was because standards in English and mathematics were too low and the provision for science was unsatisfactory. Furthermore, there were weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

This is a satisfactory school that no longer has serious weaknesses. The headteacher, ably supported by her assistant, has tackled the weaknesses and has set out a clear plan for further improvements. These senior managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and the inspectors agree with the school's view of itself. Since the last inspection, the school has retained the confidence of the school community and it is well placed to make further improvements. The parents and their children hold the school in high regard. The school works well in partnership with the village organisations and with the local authority.

The school provides a very good level of care for its pupils and the personal development of the children is a strength. As a result pupils behave very well and learn successfully, particularly in the infant classes. The quality of education and of pupils' achievement in the Foundation Stage is good, although the outdoor area needs more work. The children continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards in the basic skills are above average in writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, although the quality of teaching is inconsistent, the pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards are broadly average in Year 6. Senior managers provide good support for teachers, but the leadership role of other staff needs further development. Nevertheless, the school is effective and continuing to improve. It provides satisfactory value for money.

Grade: 3

What the school should do to improve further

In order to build on its strengths and raise standards, the school should:

- Improve teaching in the junior classes
- Improve the role of the subject leaders
- Raise standards and improve progress, particularly in writing

Achievement and standards

Pupils start school with broadly average knowledge and good social skills. The school is now successful in promoting literacy and mathematical skills in the Foundation Stage and into Year 1. Because of the good teaching in Years 1 and 2, the pupils make good progress and, by the age of seven, standards in writing and mathematics are above average. The school has revised its approach to teaching reading and has formed a closer partnership with parents. As a result, standards in reading are improving and are now broadly average. There has been a marked change in staff in Key Stage 2 and there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, pupils make satisfactory progress overall and standards in Year 6 are broadly in line with expectations. But there is scope for further improvements, particularly in the pupils' writing. Spelling is a noticeable weakness and standards of presentation are weak.

Nearly all groups of pupils, including the more able and those with special educational needs, achieve equally well. The improvement in standards in national tests has not kept pace with the national trend, but there are encouraging signs that the pupils' performance is improving.

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being

The pupils like school, enjoy their lessons and have very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are kind and considerate towards each other and they enjoy trusting relationships with the adults in school. They work well together and are confident in their interactions. Even very young children hold quite mature conversations when eating their morning fruit at playtime.

Their behaviour is excellent overall. They understand the consequences of their actions and can explain the reasoning behind school rules. Pupils contribute well to improving the quality of school life through the voice of the school council. An appropriate moral code was, for example, well promoted in an assembly within a climate of care and tolerance.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good and there are particular strengths in the moral and social aspects. The spiritual and cultural development of the pupils is well promoted through art and music and the use of other languages, for example when the daily register is taken. The

pupils are aware of other religions through their work in the humanities. They have a strong sense of their own rural cultural traditions but their awareness of cultural diversity could be promoted more strongly. Children know how to be healthy and safe.

The school has good systems to promote attendance and has been successful in discouraging unauthorised absence. Attendance levels at the school, although satisfactory, are adversely affected by a small group of irregular attenders.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching in the infant classes is good, with particular strengths in Years 1 and 2, where lessons have good pace and are sharply focused to enable the pupils to learn. In this class, the teacher skilfully uses information from assessing pupils' progress to plan their lessons, but this good practice is not consistent throughout the school. Nor is marking; in too many cases in the junior classes, the pupils are allowed to get away with careless work. However, teaching is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 2 and enables pupils to make sound progress. The headteacher has fostered a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff and has ensured that there is a good degree of support for those teachers who are new to the school. Teachers and classroom assistants work very well together for the benefit of the children. Relationships are of a high quality and secure good discipline, contributing to a positive environment for learning.

Teachers use a good range of methods to make lessons enjoyable, gain pupils' interest and involve them in their learning. From the Foundation Stage onwards, emphasis is placed on promoting self-esteem, encouraging personal development and giving pupils direct first hand experiences.

Grade: 3

Curriculum and other activities

All of the required subjects are taught, with an appropriate emphasis on English, mathematics and science. There are appropriate structures in place to ensure that the pupils build on their prior knowledge and skills, but the teachers' planning does not consistently take into account the range of ability in each class. However, the curriculum is well balanced, with much emphasis on subjects such as art, where the pupils produce work of high quality. A good example of this is the children's two- and three-dimensional interpretations of Pierre Mignard's "Marquise de Seignelay and Two of Her Sons". This fosters the pupils' creative development and enhances the school environment. The school successfully organises theme weeks such as "problem-solving" to further motivate the children. A good range of extra-curricular clubs, mainly in sport and music, is very popular with the children and provides more opportunities for the children to learn.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

The pupils are valued and well known as individuals. Their teachers and other adults make pupils' welfare a priority. The school's pastoral support is of high quality. Pupils with particular needs receive specific targeted support; good examples of this include the pupils with special educational needs and the small number of traveller children.

Appropriate child protection procedures are in place and health and safety requirements are met. The pupils' physical well-being is promoted well through the curriculum. Physical activity is encouraged through the attractive school grounds and the provision of equipment such as the very popular trim trail.

Assessment has been a focus for development within the school and the pupils' progress is monitored regularly, with feedback given on how they can improve, through the setting of learning targets. This work needs further development as it is not yet thorough enough or consistent in its quality between subjects.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and of those areas requiring development; the school's self-evaluation reflected the practice seen during the inspection. She, with effective support from the assistant headteacher, has shown great resolve in guiding the school to a position where it no longer has serious weaknesses. The pupils' academic performance is now stronger, whilst the school has maintained its caring ethos. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are happy in school and share its values. This is reflected in their work and their relationships with peers and adults. There is a strong team spirit that is based on a commitment to sharing professional expertise to ensure that the children achieve their best. This is reflected in the quality of support given to colleagues. However, the management role of key subject leaders requires development to enable them to have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject and to implement appropriate action plans to make improvements.

Governors are committed to the school and support it satisfactorily. Their awareness of their responsibility to hold it to account has grown and they do this in a variety of appropriate ways, including taking a particular interest in a class as it moves through the school and examining test results. But they need to be sharper in their analysis to ensure that the school does not slip back.

Grade: 3

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INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

How well do learners achieve?	3
The <i>standards</i> reached by learners	3
How well learners make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community.	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	Delete as appropriate
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health.	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe.	Delete as appropriate
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	Delete as appropriate
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	Delete as appropriate
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	Yes

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Helpringham Primary School
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20 June 2005

Dear Children

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our visit to your school earlier in the week. Of course, we were very disappointed that we saw so little of the juniors, as you were out enjoying the science park at Snibston. It was clear when you returned that you found it to be a lot of fun. But we very much appreciated the company of the infants and we thoroughly enjoyed our conversations with you.

What a lovely school you have. We can really understand why you enjoy it so much. We decided that everybody must have tried really hard to make sure that it did not have serious weaknesses any more. We noticed that your standard of work in English and mathematics has improved and that your teachers are working carefully to plan your lessons. We also noticed that there were many other things that made your school special. Here are some of them:

- You are trying very hard in the infant classes and are making good progress. Well done!
- Everybody understands the school rules and most of you behave extremely well
- Everybody tries to be friendly, thoughtful and helpful
- Everybody has worked really hard to make sure that the school has improved in the last two years
- The school provides a super range of activities to keep you interested
- The school makes you feel very safe.

But, of course, there are still things that can be done to make your school even better:

- Firstly we know that you can do even better with your work, especially your writing and especially as you get older. Some of your spelling and much of your presentation could be improved.
- We are asking your teachers to plan lessons a little more carefully to make sure that what you are learning is neither too hard nor too easy.
- We are also asking your teachers to spend a little more time checking what is going on to make sure that your school never slips back again now that it has made so many improvements.

Yours sincerely

Keith Edwards
Lead inspector