



Hightown First and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 107669
LEA Kirklees
Inspection number 277802
Inspection dates 8 May 2006 to 9 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Terry McDermott CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hightown Road
School category	Community		Liversedge
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		West Yorkshire WF15 8BL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01274 335240
Number on roll	174	Fax number	01274 335241
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Karen Thomas
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Prescott

Age group 3 to 9	Inspection dates 8 May 2006 - 9 May 2006	Inspection number 277802
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hightown is an average sized first school with a nursery. It serves a mixed catchment area with some social deprivation. The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The percentages of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and with statements of educational need, are broadly average. The school holds both the Investors in People and Investors in Pupils Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which gives good value for money. This agrees with the school's overall view of its performance.

Achievement is good overall. Pupils start school with below average standards and they leave with standards that are broadly average. This represents good progress. Pupils achieve well in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. They achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 2. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are consistently good, and improving. As a result, pupils make good progress. This good progress continues across Years 1 and 2 and ensures that they reach average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. However, progress in Key Stage 2 is no better than satisfactory and pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 at average levels.

Pupils' personal development and the quality of care, guidance and support provided for them are good. Pupils enjoy being in school and learning. They are polite, friendly, co-operative and exceptionally well behaved. The school cares conscientiously for them and prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding examples in all key stages, but there is a lack of challenge in some of the teaching in Years 3 and 4, slowing pupils' progress. Progress is monitored throughout the school and the information gained is used to set learning targets for groups of pupils but not yet for individual children, thereby not providing them with the detail of what they need to do to make further progress. Inconsistency in the quality of some teachers' marking also prevents pupils on occasions from knowing precisely what they need to do to improve. The curriculum is good. It offers a very good range of opportunities for enriching and extending learning.

Leadership and management are good. The well respected and quietly assertive headteacher has built an effective team that knows the school well.

Issues identified for improvement at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. The school has clear capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide greater challenge in all lessons in Years 3 and 4 and have a consistently high expectation of what pupils can achieve.
- Set challenging individual learning targets for children and mark their work to a consistently good standard so that they know what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school was modest in its evaluation of its performance in this area because it placed too much emphasis on evaluating the average standards pupils reach rather than on their achievement.

Pupils achieve well in their time in the school. They enter the nursery with below average standards, particularly in communication and mathematical skills. Because provision in the Foundation Stage is good, pupils make good progress through Nursery and Reception Years and into Key Stage 1. This good progress is maintained in Years 1 and 2 and hence standards have been broadly average overall at the end of Key Stage 1 for the past four years, although standards fell in 2005. Particular characteristics of the 2005 Year 2 group of pupils account for standards in writing being lower than usual that year. These characteristics had a similar but smaller effect in mathematics. Both resulted in standards overall in 2005 being lower than usual. Progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall, but uneven, due to a lack of consistent challenge in some lessons. Standards remain broadly average when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. No group of pupils underachieves.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school evaluated pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as outstanding. Inspectors judge it to be good. Pupils' response to their teachers and all the school offers is seen in their enjoyment of learning and exemplary behaviour. They like coming to school and are proud of their achievements. Many pupils offered positive comments such as, 'lessons are fun and exciting and things like 'Brain Gym' gets us in the right frame of mind for learning'. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Those spoken to during the inspection agreed that if problems arise they are quickly sorted out. Pupils are gaining a good understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles and eagerly participate in a variety of games during playtimes. Breakfast Club is very well attended and ensures pupils start the day with a good healthy breakfast. Pupils voice their opinions confidently through the school council and contribute ideas to improving the school. Involvement in a 'twinning project' with another school enables children to spend time with children from other ethnic backgrounds and learn about their cultures and religions. The development of good communication and social skills forms a secure base for pupils' future economic well-being. Attendance is satisfactory overall and the school works hard to improve this. In the Foundation Stage children learn to share, take turns and develop a good deal of independence. They show a high level of involvement and perseverance in their activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Outstanding teaching was also seen; however, in some lessons, particularly in Years 3 and 4, there were examples of satisfactory teaching. Classrooms are well organised and bright, stimulating learning environments; displays of pupil's work are vibrant and of high quality. The best teaching provides interesting activities, motivates pupils well and stimulates learning at a good

pace. In these lessons, work is well planned to meet individual learning needs and present a suitable level of challenge for pupils of all ability. Resources, including the interactive whiteboards are used well to gain pupils attention and help them to learn. Teaching assistants are used effectively to assist pupils in their learning. Behaviour is very well managed and teachers use praise to create a positive learning environment. In lessons where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is too slow and pupils are insufficiently challenged in their learning and therefore do not progress as fast as they should.

Assessment is good overall. However, not all teachers have the same high expectations of what the children should achieve and targets are not always challenging enough to raise achievement further and to enable teachers to check if progress is sufficient. Some marking is good and indicates precisely what pupils should do to improve their work but the practice is inconsistent throughout the school.

In the Foundation Stage the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good with examples of outstanding practice. Lessons are varied and imaginative and as a result children's interest is high and they achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements. Links made between subjects are imaginative and bring a relevance and excitement to learning. Throughout the school the strong emphasis on role play helps pupils develop their speaking and listening skills and helps to fire their imaginations for writing. Pupils benefit from varied exciting opportunities planned to enrich their learning. They are able to take part in a good range of sporting and non-sporting activities, enjoy the expertise brought by visitors and take part in educational visits. Personal, social and health education has a high priority with good attention on keeping safe. For example, during the inspection pupils were made aware of the dangers of matches from a visiting fire fighter.

The Foundation Stage provides a rich curriculum for the children both indoors and outdoors. Children enjoy learning through practical, stimulating activities that are carefully planned to meet individual learning needs, in particular to promote their communication skills and to develop independence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school judges this area to be outstanding but inspectors find that it is good. The good level of support is reflected in pupils' good personal development. Pupils are confident and feel there is always someone they can turn to for help. One child said, 'I feel safe here'. Child protection procedures are in place and understood by staff. The school gives good attention to health and safety and to ensuring a calm learning environment. Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles; they have many opportunities to take part in physical activity and eat sensibly.

Although information is used well to provide extra support for groups of pupils making slower progress, the practice of setting challenging individual targets for pupils is not yet in place. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported. Their individual targets are clearly defined and help them to build effectively on their learning. Effective use is made of external agencies to ensure these pupils receive the help they need.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is successful because the headteacher, through her good leadership, makes sure that everyone is involved in making the school a better place. Staff are given considerable levels of responsibility, to which they respond enthusiastically, leading to good levels of leadership in many areas of the school's work. However, the school has yet to tackle inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2.

There is a palpable team spirit in the school. The level of cooperation between staff, parents and governors is good, so that all are pulling in the same direction and working hard to improve the quality of education for pupils.

The school has a good idea of its strengths and weaknesses through analysing, with increasing sophistication, the information it gathers on pupil performance, though it is occasionally over optimistic in measuring the quality of its own performance. However, this information is not yet used to full effect in setting precise and challenging learning targets for individual pupils. This would improve the whole school development planning process which currently lacks some sharpness.

Weaknesses identified in the previous report have been tackled and are no longer issues for the school. Such improvements are the result of the strong focus placed on moving the school forward by the school's leaders and managers. Reading, for example, had been seen as a weakness in the past so the school drew up a plan to improve it and standards have now risen to just above average, despite the dip in 2005. The energy, knowledge and commitment of the open minded senior managers gives the school clear capacity to improve. Governance is good, and the dedicated and enthusiastic governors hold the school to account with increasing rigour.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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	
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	
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	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school and for being kind, polite and so very well behaved. We enjoyed our visit and want to share with you what we thought about your school.

Here are some of the good things we found about your school:

- we are pleased that you are very proud of your school, behave extremely well and enjoy your lessons; we also liked the way you get on with each other and with your teachers and other adults
- we were very impressed with the displays of your work on the walls, and with role play areas in every room which make your learning spaces so attractive
- we think your headteacher and all the other adults really want to make the school even better; they are very dedicated, and you are lucky to have so many good teachers!

We have asked your school to do two things to help you get even better:

- we think your teachers should expect even more from some of you, particularly in Years 3 and 4
- we think your teachers should give you even more tips, written in your books, and should set you individual targets which tell you clearly what you should do to improve.

We appreciated talking to you and enjoyed seeing you learn. We wish you well for the future.