



Hermitage Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111043
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278580
Inspection dates 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Mark Madeley CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hermitage Drive
School category	Community		Holmes Chapel
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Crewe, Cheshire CW4 7NP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01477 532838
Number on roll	200	Fax number	01477 549146
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Nobody currently elected
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Mrs H Jarrold

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is located in a socially advantaged village community in east Cheshire. It is of broadly average size. There are no children for whom English is an additional language and very few children who are entitled to free school meals. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. An integral part of the school is the speech and language unit. Currently, seven children attend this unit from other schools and all require additional support. The school has gained many awards including Silver Arts mark, Basic Skills, Investors in People, Healthy Schools and Heartbeat catering award.

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 with many high quality features. It gives very good value for money. In these respects the team agrees with the school's overall self-evaluation. Children reach above average standards in the national tests because teaching is effective through the school. The school recognises that children's writing skills are not quite as good as their skills in mathematics and science and has put in place measures to improve them. Staff very successfully encourage children's personal development. They have an outstanding knowledge of healthy lifestyles and of how to keep safe. Attendance is exceptional. The language unit improves children's speech and language, but staff have had limited training in working with children who have very complex learning and behavioural needs. The progress of these children is satisfactory overall.

The school has formed excellent links with the pre-school and the local secondary school which help children make a smooth transition to the next stage in their education and which enhance the curriculum. Staff are also intensively involved in curriculum and community links. Provision in the Foundation Stage gives children a good start to their schooling. Nearly all reach the expected standard for their age before they join Year 1. The school is able to improve further because the senior management team provide outstanding leadership and it is constantly reviewing its work. It has made good improvements since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Train all staff on the teaching of children with complex learning needs.
- Improve children's writing skills by continuing to provide quality opportunities to use and develop them in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well and reach standards which are above average and improving year on year. Standards are rising because children experience consistently effective teaching through the school.

Children join the school with standards that are above those normally found because most have attended local pre-schools. They make good progress through the Foundation Stage and nearly all enter Year 1 having achieved the expected standard for their age. Standards in Year 2 were well above average in 2004 with a strength in mathematics. They have been consistently high for 5 years and the unvalidated results for 2005 continue this trend. In Year 6 in 2004 children's results were well above average with significant strengths in mathematics and science. Reading was very strong, but the school identified children's writing as an area for development. Standards have been rising for the last four years. This trend continued in 2005 when standards were extremely high. The school sets itself challenging targets and manages

to reach them year on year. All children make good progress through the school. The difference in standards between boys and girls is related to differences in the children rather than in provision.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in main school make good progress towards the targets set for them because they are supported well by staff. The nature of children's needs in the speech and language unit has altered recently. These children make satisfactory progress. Staff provide skilled help to meet their speech and language needs, but they do not have extensive experience of working with children with complex learning and behavioural needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development and well-being are outstanding and even better than the school judges them to be. They are attentive in class and work hard because they are very keen to learn. Parents say that their children are very happy and safe in school and the excellent attendance levels support this view. Children know how adults expect them to behave because they know and follow the 'Golden Rules', and they rarely disappoint. They state that there is hardly any bullying and no racism in the school and most parents agree that any such incidents are dealt with quickly. The 'heroes and heroines' assembly celebrates their achievements and this is raising children's self-esteem.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They welcome the chance to help others, for instance Year 6 children have a 'buddy system' with the Reception class children. They have many opportunities to take responsibility, which helps them to become mature and caring members of society. The extensive efforts by all children for local and national charities show that they care for others less fortunate than themselves. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Their positive attitudes, good attendance and very good basic skills are an outstanding platform for the next stage in their learning.

The school takes account of children's views, for example, water dispensers will be fitted soon following a request from the children. Exciting humanities topics help the children become very familiar with their local heritage. Children get to know a variety of cultural traditions, such as African drumming, through music, art and religious education; they celebrate the festivals of many major world faiths. The school makes good provision to help children prepare for life in a multicultural society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good through the school and as a result children achieve well. Excellent relationships and well established routines help to create a purposeful environment for learning. Outstanding displays of children's work celebrate their

efforts and remind children of the very high standards that are expected. Teachers encourage children to work together in pairs or groups and this fosters their co-operation, such as during an outstanding Year 6 French lesson when children confidently asked each other questions in French and understood the answers. Teachers are clear in their instructions to children and use questioning well to establish children's understanding. There are times when some staff dominate discussions and children become slightly inattentive because they are not involved. Support staff are used well to help children learn or assess progress. The school's assessment procedures are good and the data used well to plan the next stage in children's learning.

Teaching and learning in the speech and language unit is frequently good. The needs of the children joining the unit are changing and some have complex learning and behavioural difficulties. Staff do not have the experience to fully meet these needs. They integrate children into the life of the school quite well which prepares them to return to mainstream schooling.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets in full the children's learning needs and statutory requirements. Foundation Stage children happily learn mainly through practical activities which are based on a theme. In Years 1 to 6, planning has been reviewed after an extensive audit. Whilst some subject lessons will continue to be taught, the school now explores more fully natural links between subjects so that learning becomes more meaningful for children and their thinking is challenged. Sound initiatives to improve writing are also in place, but it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness. The curriculum is extended by very well taught French lessons, a very strong commitment to the Arts and special events like Healthy Week.

Parents and children are delighted with the extensive range of after school clubs, which extend children's opportunities to excel and also promote a healthy lifestyle. The children enjoy the frequent trips to places of interest and the school makes an outstanding contribution to children's teamwork skills and self-confidence by organising four residential visits. Very good use is made of the high quality school grounds as an educational resource.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that this aspect is outstanding. Every child matters in this school. Children say, very readily, that they feel safe at school, with no personal fear of being bullied or discriminated against. They trust the staff and know that there is always someone they can turn to for help; children's questionnaires support these findings. A strong ethos of care permeates all areas of the school, for instance during a dance lesson staff gave safety a very high priority. Child protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place.

Children get extensive support with their school work. Marking is helpful. Many know their English and mathematics targets and most know how they will achieve them. Reports and other information to parents are high quality, a significant improvement on the last inspection.

The school encourages children to embrace a healthy lifestyle by eating well and taking part in the numerous extra curricular activities, such as football, cricket and outdoor games.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Management at all levels provides the school with outstanding direction and this has led to annual improvements in standards. Teamwork amongst staff is very strong and all are willing to accept responsibility. Staff understand the school development plan because they were fully involved in formulating it. Crucially, they are given time to fulfil their management roles and thus are effective in supporting colleagues to raise standards.

The response to the issues from the last inspection has been very good. The school's self-evaluation was accurate. These two measures indicate that the school has the ability to improve further.

Monitoring systems are efficient and the school's performance is analysed carefully, even to the extent of analysing the children's responses to individual test questions. The school is highly inclusive because staff care deeply about every individual. Tolerance and understanding are promoted well and children respond very positively.

The school uses its below average funding very efficiently. It has sought additional funding and used it well to improve the buildings. The 'carry forward' amount in the school budget is quite large, but nearly half of it is already spent on the grounds and the outdoor environment for the Foundation Stage. Because the governing body is being reconstituted, it has not met for more than five months. However, the governors have innovative ways of keeping in touch with the work of the school and they are very supportive of it.

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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?	1	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	2	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	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	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?	1	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	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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

Mrs Hunt and I very much enjoyed our recent visit to your school. We agree with you that you have a really good school. We found you to be very welcoming - lots of smiles, friendly waves and even the offer to share an apple - which helped us feel at home. Walking around the school looking at displays gave us an early indication that you do wonderful work in all subjects. You were very polite to us and to each other, taking turns to speak and holding doors open. We were very impressed by the way many of you take on responsibilities like the school council or recycling and road safety officers in such a mature way and by your charity work. You behaved very well most of the time and we saw some good cooperation, especially in dance classes.

Other things we liked about your school were:

- the high quality teamwork amongst all the staff
- the high standards you achieve in tests and the good progress you make
- the way all staff care about each and every one of you
- the amazing range of clubs and visits the staff offer you.

Even good schools like yours need to improve. We have asked Mrs Jarrold and her team to:

- train staff to help children who have great difficulty learning as fast as most of you do
- give you opportunities to write in different styles in subjects other than English so that you can improve your skills even further.

You are terrific ambassadors for your school. Many thanks for your help and good luck for the future.