

Heather Garth Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106608
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	287561
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Swallow

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandra Farr
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Wise
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002
School address	Billingley View Bolton-on-Dearne Rotherham South Yorkshire S63 8ES
Telephone number	01709 894149
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Heather Garth is an average sized primary school situated in the village of Bolton-on Dearne, South Yorkshire. It draws its pupils from a socially and economically disadvantaged area where unemployment is high. Almost all pupils are of White British origin and there are a larger number of boys than girls in most years. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and requiring support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school shares its site with a recently opened Children's Centre and Neighbourhood Nursery. The school has Investors in People and National Healthy School 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 where pupils feel safe and happy and enjoy their learning.

Staff work very effectively with the adjacent Neighbourhood Nursery, the Children's Centre and a range of external services, to provide high levels of integrated care that meet the needs of all learners. Provision in the Foundation Stage is of a good quality. Many aspects of the school's work are highly valued by parents. They feel that, 'Heather Garth is a real family environment.' and that, 'The teachers really live and care for the children.' Staff work hard to provide a stimulating environment in which pupils are encouraged to become confident learners. As a result attendance is in line with national expectations and behaviour is excellent.

Standards reached by the end of Year 6 have significantly increased this year, but remain below average in English and mathematics, from below average starting points at the end of Year 2. Boys do not achieve as well as expected, particularly in Years 3 to 6. This still represents overall good achievement for most pupils, given their well below average starting points on entry to the school and, in particular, their significantly low literacy and numeracy skills. The increasingly good quality of teaching is improving current standards, particularly in Years 3 to 6, where pupils are poised to achieve higher outcomes than in recent years. Staffing is now more stable than in previous years and the new building programme is resulting in larger and better-equipped classrooms. Good quality teaching is characterised by a thoughtful approach that brings learning alive, whilst not neglecting the basic skills. Pupils say that, 'Lessons are interesting and fun.' They believe that their teachers really want them to do well.

Parents are very appreciative of the school and the good care, guidance and support it gives to their children. They say that, 'When you visit the school it has a lovely, quiet calmness.' and praise the way in which, 'All pupils are treated with equality and encouraged to do the best that they can.' Pupils' mature and responsible behaviour means that they act safely and show respect for the world around them. Their strong awareness of how food and exercise affects their bodies gives them an excellent understanding of the importance of living healthily. The opportunities afforded to pupils to take on responsibilities and engage in fund-raising and other public events, ensure that most develop a sense of value gained from contributing to a community. Their developing literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, prepare them adequately for their future lives.

Good leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff have ensured continuous improvement since the last inspection. The school challenges and evaluates itself well. It is determined to raise standards further through rigorous target setting, regular progress checks and bespoke support to boost pupil's performance. Governance is good. The aspiration, on behalf of all pupils at Heather Garth primary school, demonstrates that the school provides good value for money and that there is good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and helps children to achieve well. Children are well cared for and their health, safety and achievement are of paramount importance. Children enter the Reception Year from the adjacent Neighbourhood Nursery and links between the two settings are highly effective. Overall levels of skills on entry are well below national expectations and significantly below with regard to language and calculation. Most children rapidly develop

positive attitudes and make good progress, notably in their physical development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. By the time children begin Year 1, the level of their skills in reading, writing and calculation have improved, but are still well below those expected for their age. Children's behaviour and enjoyment of learning are good. They arrive keen to play and quickly become involved in activities of their choice. They respond well to the friendliness of the staff and the well laid out, stimulating environment. Activities are carefully planned around a theme and the immediate environment is often used to enrich the learning. For example, washing socks and hanging them on the outdoor washing line provided an interesting stimulus for ordering according to size. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Staff enjoy very good relationships with children and teaching assistants make a good contribution to children's learning and personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Improve boys' achievement in English and mathematics, particularly in Years 3 to 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter school with well below average attainment and significantly low literacy and numeracy skills. They enter Year 1 with improved skills in reading, writing and calculation. These are still well below those expected for their age, despite the overall good progress made in the Reception Year. In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well, particularly in writing and mathematics. Recent strategies to improve writing skills, through more intensive speaking and listening activities are impacting well. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average. Pupils' progress across Years 3 to 6 is improving. Historically, progress has been satisfactory, leading to below average outcomes in English and mathematics, but broadly average outcomes in science. The school's most recent information for pupils in Years 5 and 6 shows that they are making good progress and are set to reach broadly average standards. This improvement in progress is borne out by the school's observations of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 and by inspectors' judgments. It is largely attributable to the recruitment of new staff, increased stability in staffing and specific strategies designed to improve pupils' learning. Higher attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily, but the performance of some boys, especially across Years 3 to 6, is below expectations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, because they are supported and challenged to good effect. The school sets ambitious targets to raise achievement but does not always succeed in attaining them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils really enjoy school. A Year 6 pupil described how they 'couldn't wait to get up in the morning on a school day'. Attendance is in line with the national average and has improved since the last inspection. Throughout the school pupils behave extremely well and cooperate together very maturely in and out of class. They say that there is no bullying because, 'We are all friendly and get along together.' They feel that they have a say in decisions which affect them in their work and play, through the recently extended school council and the many other opportunities to voice their opinions. Pupils are well aware of the importance of diet and exercise in order to stay healthy and they subsequently take full advantage of the fruit scheme and breakfast club. Overall, pupils' spiritual,

moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils learn to take account of the feelings of others and to understand the difference between right and wrong. However, the school acknowledges that it could do more to make pupils aware of the beliefs and customs of cultures different to their own. Their satisfactory literacy, numeracy and ICT skills mean they are adequately prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Central to the pupils' progress in this school is the good work of their teachers. There is a real feeling of everyone working together as a tightly knit team to maximise the quality of what goes on in classrooms. Teaching and learning are good because teachers have high expectations and pupils respond enthusiastically to their work. Pupils say they really appreciate the way in which teachers make lessons more interesting. For example, in a Year 3 drama lesson pupils used vivid imagination in a 'dinosaur hunt' to develop impressive vocabulary for a piece of creative writing. Lessons are planned well with a range of activities that encourage pupils to think for themselves and to collaborate effectively in small groups. In their search to continually improve, teachers, in Years 3 to 6, are devising new ways of putting more challenge into lessons and enhance, particularly, the progress made by boys. Pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught and supported well and, consequently, make good progress. Teachers value all pupils and, as a result, all relationships are excellent. The use of whiteboards and digital projectors adds interest and stimulation in lessons, although there is scope for pupils to use this exciting technology in a more interactive way. Teachers' comments in books give increasingly clear advice on how well pupils achieve and what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is satisfactory overall. Current provision has been shaped appropriately to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and to meet better the needs of boys across Years 3 to 6. Theme days, visiting artists and extra-curricular activities provide additional opportunities for pupils to learn in a wider context. Regular swimming and the multi-use games area, together with planned discussion times, contribute successfully to their awareness of the importance of safe and healthy living. An appropriate range of enrichment events is held regularly, including sport, music, dance and drama. Visits to local theatre companies and museums, and an annual joint residential visit with a local school, for pupils in Year 6, develop the skills related to team building. The school acknowledges that it needs to do more to improve pupils' thinking skills and their understanding of global issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The strong commitment of all staff to pupils' care, guidance and support is a distinctive feature of this school. Overall provision is good. The high quality of care, and the development of pupils' social and emotional well-being, form a strong foundation to the school's ethos. Pupils feel safe and happy. They say that they always have someone to turn to should they have concerns. The learning mentor makes a major contribution to this provision and, in particular, ensures effective primary and secondary school transition. Child protection procedures meet

government guidelines. Good quality individual education plans and extensive support from an industrious team of teaching assistants ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for. There are increasingly effective systems to assess and track pupils' progress, enabling all staff to rigorously analyse the achievements of different groups of pupils. Where teachers set precise targets in lessons, pupils are becoming more involved in assessing their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has created a stimulating and friendly environment in which the needs of the child are of paramount importance. Staff share her passion for high quality education and care. They speak very highly of her leadership. They have confidence in her vision of a fully inclusive school, which provides a range of extended services, for the benefit of all learners, adults as well as pupils. The senior leadership team's relentless focus on achievement has brought about effective improvements since the last inspection. Heather Garth enjoys an increasingly positive reputation within the local community and excellent links with local authority services, other schools and education providers.

Staff are encouraged to reflect and share good practice. Subject leaders feel empowered and accountable for delivering high quality provision and raising standards. The school has excellent tracking procedures that are used with increasing confidence to pinpoint individual pupils who may not be achieving as well as they can and to trigger suitable support. Governors are supportive and ambitious for the future of the school. They are increasingly knowledgeable about what the school does well and in how it needs to improve.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when Mrs Thomas and I visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you all and being in your lessons. We were particularly impressed to see how hard you work and how well you behave at all times!

We thought that your new classrooms were really good and provided you with much more space in which to learn. The 'muga' is a super facility and we know how much you enjoy playing sport and keeping healthy. The daily breakfast is very good idea and we were very tempted by the smell of toast each morning! The discussions we had with the school council members, past and present, were really helpful. You speak and act in a very mature manner and show very caring attitudes to each other. It is very clear how much you all enjoy being at Heather Garth.

We agree with you that your school gives you a good education. We saw how much you enjoy your lessons and how much fun you have working on practical tasks. Your teachers are good at making lessons enjoyable, as well as making sure that you learn. Most of you are achieving well and many of you are reaching standards in English, mathematics and science, by the time you leave school, that are similar to schools nationally. This is because your school is well led and managed. All the staff care about you and they clearly enjoy working in such a friendly and stimulating environment.

It is part of our job to point out what schools should do to improve their work. Your headteacher and all the other adults want you to do well, so we have asked them to help you to achieve even higher standards in English and mathematics by the time you leave school. We have asked them especially to ensure that boys make better progress in Years 3 to 6. You can help by always trying your best and concentrating hard on the suggestions that your teachers make to improve your work.

We very much hope that you continue to enjoy your time at school and wish you every success in the future.