

Halfway Junior School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 107046 |
| Local Authority | Sheffield |
| Inspection number | 287690 |
| Inspection dates | 2–3 May 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Philip Cole |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 180 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Karl Noble |
| Headteacher | Mrs K Vince |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 July 2002 |
| School address | Halfway Centre Halfway Sheffield South Yorkshire S20 4TA |
| Telephone number | 0114 2482629 |
| Fax number | 0114 2510964 |

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|--------------------------|--------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a suburb of Sheffield with a mixture of owner-occupied and rented housing. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average, while the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which is improving and has significant strengths. Parents are very supportive and appreciate the care and openness of the staff. Pupils have only good things to say about the school: they are happy, enjoy lessons, really like their teachers and their helpers and are enthusiastic about the many additional activities available to them. Their personal development is good in all aspects and provides a firm foundation for their learning, and together with their secure basic skills enables them to face the future with confidence.

Standards are average, but have shown an improving trend in the last few years, particularly in English. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, with pupils having made slightly better progress in English and science than mathematics, although the latter is improving now that teaching is more focused on the areas where pupils' learning was weakest. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against their targets.

Teaching is satisfactory. The school judges it to be good. There are general strengths which the school has identified, such as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning and the careful and purposeful way in which new ideas are developed in lessons. Teachers are also using assessment satisfactorily to modify what they teach and to set targets for groups; these are beginning to help pupils to understand better what they need to do to improve. However, the full impact of this approach has yet to be felt. Teachers do not refer to the targets sufficiently often in lessons or when marking pupils' work. They do not provide enough specific guidance to individuals to help them take the next steps in their learning.

The curriculum is good and contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Smart links are made between subjects, which provide, for example, opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in a variety of purposeful contexts. There is a good emphasis on teaching learning skills and practical activities. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, utilises the skills of the fully trained teaching assistants well and underpins the good progress they make. Increasingly appropriate provision is being made for those who are gifted or talented.

Care, guidance and support are good. The school works very effectively to promote pupils' understanding of healthy living and what they need to do to keep safe. Procedures are in place to safeguard them. The progress that pupils make is now regularly tracked, and this underpins the effective identification of, and support given to, those who need extra help or those whose performance has slipped.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides calm and reflective leadership that is focused on raising standards and improving the school. With the headteacher's encouragement and support, teachers are making increasingly effective contributions to identifying what the school does well and what could be better and in taking action to tackle weaknesses. Governors also are also fully involved in this process and, as a result, the school is well placed to make continued improvement. Given improving standards and achievement, pupils' good personal development and the good quality provision and care, the school provides good value for money.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with more guidance on what they can do themselves to make their work better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Over time, pupils' attainment on entry to the school has usually been in line with or slightly above average. Results attained by pupils tested in Year 6 have steadily risen over several years from below to above average in 2005. In 2006, however, when there were more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, they were average. As in most schools, girls attain better than boys in the national tests. Pupils make steady progress and all groups, including boys, achieve satisfactorily in English, mathematics and science given their starting points. In the past many pupils have achieved a little better in English and science than they have in mathematics. Progress in mathematics is now on a par with the other subjects because the teachers have tackled weaknesses in aspects of number work which were identified through assessments of what pupils know. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress towards their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils take the school motto 'Be proud of yourself; be proud of your school' very seriously and, as a result, they take great care in their work and of their school. They are quietly confident and assured because of the pervading calm ethos. Behaviour and relationships are good and attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Good quality collective worship, personal, social, health and citizenship education and learning opportunities across the curriculum enable them to reflect on issues and to appreciate diverse beliefs and cultures. Particular strengths are pupils' social skills and their preparedness for future economic well-being. They organise and manage the excellent school council. Acting as 'playground friends' provides another outlet for them to show good leadership skills. Pupils contribute well to the wider community through imaginative fundraising for charities and by monitoring and improving their own school environment. They enjoy learning and eagerly participate in physical activities. They benefit from healthy school meals and snacks and contribute to improving them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Across the school, teachers ensure that pupils work purposefully in lessons. They do this by making clear to them what they will be learning and what they should be able to do by the end of each lesson, and by creating a calm and supportive atmosphere which is conducive to learning. Teachers carefully develop new ideas and make good use of interactive whiteboards to bring learning to life. As a result, pupils achieve what has been planned. In the best lessons pupils make impressive progress because teachers take pupils along at a brisk pace and demand a lot from them. Less is achieved where the pace is more pedestrian. The needs of different groups are met satisfactorily in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught very well in small groups by the skilful teaching assistants and this enables them to make very

good progress towards their specific targets. Pupils are beginning to understand better what they can do to improve through the targets that are set for groups in each class and from the feedback they get from teachers, but these developments are not yet embedded or fully effective in moving the pupils on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum effectively meets pupils' needs and provides an enjoyable basis for their learning. This is very evident in the programmes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and more recently for those who are gifted or talented. There are good opportunities to develop key skills in literacy, mathematics and ICT in other subjects, such as science and geography. Pupils' learning skills benefit greatly from activities such as 'brain gym' and regular problem-solving lessons. Project work and practical activities often lead to high quality work, such as that resulting from the study of Indian art and the birdwatching research. Pupils' learning is enriched by visitors and visits to places such as Eden Camp which have stimulated work on the Second World War and by participation in residential visits in both Years 4 and 5. Parents and the wider community are often involved in the regular 'themed weeks' such as those on multiculturalism and science. There are many good activities for pupils after school ranging from football and multi-sport to art and design and the homework club organised by governors. These are well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and well cared for because the systems to ensure their health, safety, protection and welfare are effective and adults are caring and sensitive to their needs. There are extensive programmes that are successfully encouraging pupils to live healthily and to avoid putting themselves at risk. Good attendance and behaviour are monitored closely and promoted well. Pupils are regularly assessed and their progress is carefully tracked. As a result, pupils who are experiencing difficulties are identified early, and effective support, involving parents, is put in place to help them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's calm, thoughtful and caring approach sets the tone in school and creates a harmonious environment for learning which supports equality of opportunity well. Due to several teachers reaching retirement age over the last three years there has been a significant change in the school's staff. Teachers new to the school have settled well and together with other staff have been successfully encouraged to develop their professional, leadership and management skills. As a result, they are fully involved in school development and confident to take initiatives, and willingly take on responsibility. Plans to improve the school are carefully thought through and informed by extensive and effective monitoring and mostly accurate evaluation of its work. Governors are keen and interested. They find out for themselves how well the school is working and actively involve themselves in bringing about improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

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| 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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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 |

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

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| 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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 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, 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Halfway Junior School, Sheffield S20 4TA

We really enjoyed our visit to your school. We think that your school is satisfactory at present but that it is improving and does some things well. You told us how much you enjoyed school and how well the teachers look after you. We could see that you do indeed enjoy school and we agree that everyone cares well for you. The school council is excellent. We were particularly impressed with their idea of emailing parents with news about school in order to save paper and help the environment instead of keeping them informed through the traditional newsletter. Your behaviour is good, you get on well together and have a good understanding of what you need to do to keep fit and healthy and to keep out of harm's way.

Your lessons are interesting and your teachers are careful to make sure that you understand what you are learning. This ensures that you make steady progress in your learning. We think that the targets you are given are beginning to help you in your work but you are not yet being given enough help to understand what you can do to make your work better.

All the grown-ups in school want you to have the best school possible and they are working hard to make this happen. For example, they are giving you more opportunities to practise your writing when you are doing science and other subjects and this is making your writing better. The problem-solving activities you do are improving your thinking skills.

We think that the school can improve further by:

- helping you to understand more clearly what you can do to make your work better and to take the next steps in your learning.

You can then help your teachers by working hard to do what they suggest.

I would like to thank you for being so friendly and welcoming.