

Hannah Ball Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110324
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	288633
Inspection date	25 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Bernice Magson

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr J Preece
Headteacher	Mrs M A Moore
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002
School address	Philip Road High Wycombe HP13 7JS
Telephone number	01494 522476
Fax number	01494 442008

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how the school is seeking to raise standards in reading and writing: how well the needs of vulnerable pupils are addressed: and how successful are temporary leaders and managers in developing the school's aims and priorities. Evidence was gathered from the school's records, planning and policies, from observing teaching and learning, and from discussions with children, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in this report.

Description of the school

A small infant school, serving a community that includes some areas with very high levels of social deprivation. Children join the school in the autumn term, after their fourth birthday. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and, a higher than average number have English as an additional language. Above average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The movement of pupils in and out of school other than at times of normal admission is above average. A temporary appointment has been made of teacher-in-charge of leadership and management, during the absence of the headteacher. The school has achieved the Activemark Award for sport and Investors in People status. Extended services are provided on the same site, including pre-school provision and adult education classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides its pupils with a good quality of education. The headteacher, teacher-in-charge, staff and governors promote good achievement with a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development, well-being and care. Parents appreciate the school's caring family ethos, describing 'a happy and friendly school, which works well in promoting the development of the whole child'. Pupils make good progress overall. Those pupils having English as an additional language achieve equally with others. The good quality of additional support ensures good achievement for the above average numbers of pupils who find learning in reading and writing more difficult. From well below average starting points, pupils attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Few pupils attain the higher levels in national tests, particularly in writing.

Personal development and well-being is good. Pupils are eager to attend and enjoy all the school has to offer. Behaviour and relationships are good, both between pupils and with adults. Pupils feel safe and secure. They move about school confidently, work together happily, and undertake special jobs responsibly. School council members care for others successfully at breaktimes. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and join enthusiastically in sporting activities. A favourite activity is 'playing on the blue slide in the playground, and balancing on the climbing apparatus'. Most show good skills of agility. A strength of the school is the pupils' excellent contribution to the local community. Recently, for example, pupils made hanging baskets of summer flowers, which were distributed in the local area. Local residents visit regularly to share in festivals and concerts. Pupils' knowledge of wider world issues is developing successfully through assemblies and class discussions, and supported by their charity collections and recycling. They have been effective in bringing about school improvement too, such as in the introduction of a friendship bench in the playground. There is satisfactory development of pupils' basic skills, necessary for the next stage of their education and future economic well-being.

Teaching is mostly good, although satisfactory in the teaching of writing skills, and in the Reception class. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and work hard in lessons. In the majority of lessons, teachers use a variety of learning experiences, which interest and motivate pupils. In a good lesson in Year 1, pupils improved their skills of combining letter sounds, as they read 'silly sentences' together, laughing at strange situations. The teacher focused effectively on their recognition of known sounds to help them read new vocabulary. Through her good preparation of resources, and by skilful questioning, the learning moved on at a rapid pace. In a few lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is insufficient, and their expectations are not high enough, particularly for the more able pupils in writing. Pupils spend too much time in copying and opportunities for independent work are insufficient. Skills of handwriting and presentation are developing well. In the Reception class, the accommodation presents difficulties for the teacher and other adults to organise. Time spent in managing several separate classroom areas restricts the opportunities for adult-led focused tasks with individuals or small groups.

A good range of visits and visitors enhance a satisfactory curriculum. In Years 1 and 2, the development of basic skills has a strong focus, including in information and communication technology (ICT). Some links are made across subjects to consolidate skills, but not consistently. Good additional support is provided for those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Programmes on computers and the interactive whiteboard are effective in helping those pupils at an early stage of speaking English. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a satisfactory

number of extra curricular activities, which are arranged at lunchtimes. In the Reception class, there is a good balance of exploratory play and adult-led activities indoors. However, learning tasks in the outdoors focus mostly on the development of physical skills.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good improvements have been achieved in standards since the last inspection. The teacher-in-charge, ably supported by other staff and governors, has effectively maintained the school's ethos and direction. They have focused effectively on raising standards in reading, for example, in purchasing resources for the teaching of letters and sounds. However, strategic planning lacks clarity, with the result that leaders and managers are not fully involved in monitoring and self-review. Current improvement targets are broad and lack sufficient challenge, particularly for raising standards in writing. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enjoy school and attend regularly. Staff care for children well, and they feel safe and secure. Their personal development is good. Children respond appropriately to school rules and have positive attitudes to their learning. They concentrate well both in classroom tasks, and outdoors. Relationships between children are good. For instance, children played amicably in the hospital, showing good empathy for each other, as they recovered from pretend illnesses. Teaching and learning, and the curriculum, are satisfactory. There are several separate classroom areas, which are difficult for the teacher and other adults to manage. As a result, the time allocated to adult-led activities is sometimes restricted. Outdoors there is too limited a range of experiences to challenge children rigorously in each area of learning. The teaching of reading is good. Children enjoy listening to stories, and gain rapidly in their early phonic knowledge. Parents give good support by listening to their child read at home. Overall children achieve satisfactorily, and are nearing expected goals by the end of the reception year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing, particularly for those pupils capable of reaching the higher levels.
- Improve the range and organisation of activities for learning in the Foundation Stage.
- Develop a more focused improvement plan to increase the roles of leaders at all levels in strategic planning, monitoring and self-evaluation.

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Annex A

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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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

05 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Hannah Ball Infant School, High Wycombe, HP13 7JS

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school a few days ago. It was good to meet so many of you and I had a lovely time. I enjoyed watching so many of you receive achievement awards in assembly. I can see why you enjoy coming to Hannah Ball School every day. I think that you have a good school. What I liked most is:

- you are good at attending school, and enjoy winning the Pooh Bear Award
- you work hard in lessons, and do well in reading and number work
- your teachers make lessons fun
- everybody takes good care of you and this helps to make you feel happy and safe
- your parents and carers are happy that you come to this school
- you are excellent at inviting local residents and friends into your school, and you join in local events very willingly.

Even though your school is good, the adults want to make it even better. There are three things, which I have asked them to do. The teachers are going to work hard on finding ways to make your writing better, particularly for those children who find writing easier. In the Reception class, the adults are going to organise activities differently, and provide tasks that are more exciting for you to do outdoors. Your headteacher, staff and governors are going to look carefully at how the school is doing, so that it can continue to improve.

I hope that you carry on enjoying school and learning many interesting things.

Yours sincerely,

Bernice Magson

Lead Inspector