



# Highfields Community Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111081  
**Local Authority** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 288851  
**Inspection dates** 7–8 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Paul Bamber

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Cumberland Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community		Nantwich
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Cheshire CW5 6HA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 626125
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	202	<b>Fax number</b>	01270 627409
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Dutton
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Linda Davis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 October 2001		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
4–11	7–8 February 2007	288851

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils at this average sized school come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. The vast majority are of White British heritage and a tiny minority speak English as an additional language. Lower than average proportions have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or are entitled to a free school meal. A larger proportion of pupils than average join or leave the school at other than the normal time. The school has the Inclusion Quality Mark and have a Healthy School award. The school has undergone a total change of personnel and direction in its senior management team over the last two years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In the last two years, this school has improved significantly and provides the pupils with a good education. It is led by a very able headteacher who rigorously pursues high standards and achievement. This is a core aim of leadership and management. Not lost, however, has been the realisation that without happy, motivated pupils who develop as well rounded young citizens that central aim is unlikely to be achieved. These are both strong features of the school's very effective provision.

Pupils throughout the school have traditionally attained above average standards in the basic skills of reading and number. They have not done as well in science. Over the last three years the progress pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made in the subject has been weak. Despite the school's recognition of this and indications that recently initiated strategies to improve achievement in science are bearing some fruit, it remains a weakness in pupils' otherwise good achievement. The way in which pupils' progress is tracked in science and to a lesser extent in mathematics is less robust than in English, which has led to less good achievement in these subjects. By contrast, the strategies the school has introduced to improve pupils' performance in writing, including tracking, have been very successful, to the extent that their achievement in English was in the top 5% in the country in 2006. The foundations for this excellent performance and the school's overall good standards and achievement are laid in the effective teaching in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2. The effective and sometimes outstanding teaching in Years 3 to 6 continues to promote pupils' good progress. An issue not yet addressed is that throughout the school, although girls perform as well as boys nationally, they do not match the much better achievement of boys in the school.

Pupils are very well cared for and the more vulnerable are well supported to achieve as well as others and to become more confident and self-assured. Because all pupils feel valued and safe and teachers have high expectations of their conduct and attitudes, pupils behave sensibly and relate well to each other and to adults. They develop good personal skills as a result of the many opportunities they have to take responsibility, to work independently and cooperatively and to engage in problem-solving activities.

The enriched curriculum not only provides children with a very good start in the Reception class but very effectively promotes pupils' basic skills and enables them to benefit considerably from specialist teaching. Examples of this are in French, dance and music. Recent appointments to the senior management team have considerably enhanced the quality of assessment, of pupils' achievements in information and communication technology (ICT) and of target setting.

The school's own evaluations of its quality and provision are accurate. Its recent very good improvement and its success in addressing the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report place it in a good position to improve further. Governors are effective and work resolutely and successfully in partnership with the headteacher to eliminate weaknesses in the school's arrangements. They ensure prudent financial management and have been proactive in improving the school's environment, which now provides

pupils with light, airy and roomy accommodation. The school gives good value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Track pupils' progress in science as rigorously as in English.
- Throughout the school raise girls' performance to the same high level as that of the boys.
- Improve pupils' achievement in science, so that by Year 6 they achieve high standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children enter the school with broadly average standards. As a result of very effective teaching, support and assessment, they make good progress in the Reception class and enter Year 1 having exceeded national expectations in all areas of their learning. Overall, they make good progress and achieve well through Years 1 to 6, generally meeting the challenging targets set for them in the national tests in English and mathematics. Boys make better progress than girls and the school is currently engaged in finding out why and what to do about it. It has implemented successful strategies to raise boys' achievement, especially in writing, and they have considerably outperformed boys nationally over the last two years. Achievement is best in English, especially writing, and least good in science, where underachievement over the last two years in Years 3 to 6 is now being addressed. Pupils who have a particular gift or talent achieve well in English, mathematics and the arts because the school meets their needs well. The same is true of vulnerable pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are more able. The support for these groups is good and well managed.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are above average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils feel valued. One voiced the views of many, saying 'You feel proud and part of the school.' Behaviour is generally good because pupils know what is expected of them, although occasionally some calling out by a few younger pupils slows the pace of learning. Pupils enjoy the school clubs and residential visits, developing the skills of cooperation and teamwork that will stand them in good stead for the future. They have a good understanding of their own culture and a satisfactory understanding of other cultures. Responsibilities such as being a 'playground pal' or a 'reading buddy' are taken seriously. Closer relationships between younger and older pupils are enhanced as a result. School councillors contribute many ideas to improve the school, notably serving healthy options at lunchtime and improvements to the playground. By the end of Year 6, pupils have

developed into thoughtful, reliable young people who are well prepared for the next stage of education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are well taught and they are enthusiastic and competent learners. Pupils have good opportunities to share ideas and work practically, and are fully challenged to achieve their best. This promotes particularly good learning. Pupils respond very positively to lessons that make imaginative use of ICT. Where learning is outstanding, pupils work at a cracking pace on tasks that fully engage them and that match their needs exactly. English teaching, especially of writing, is of particularly good quality. The school acknowledges that until very recently, teachers have insufficiently engaged pupils in challenging practical tasks in science, contributing to some underachievement. Where teaching is satisfactory, too little attention is paid to matching tasks well to the needs of pupils of different abilities and there is an imbalance between pupils' listening and doing. The quality of teaching and support in the Reception class is consistently good and this enables children to have a fine start to their education. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very well focused and most of them thrive as a result. Some specialist teaching enhances pupils' learning and achievements. An outstanding dance lesson taught by a member of staff from the local secondary school with performing arts status was a fine example, promoting pupils' outstanding progress and tremendous enjoyment.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum in the Foundation Stage ensures that children acquire self-confidence and a strong desire to learn. The strength of curricular provision for Years 1 to 6 is in the emphasis on teaching basic skills in English and mathematics. Until recently, less emphasis has been placed on the science curriculum, particularly practical activities. Consequently, standards have dipped. Provision for ICT has improved and there are now opportunities to develop pupils' skills across several subjects. Art, music, physical education and French are given a high profile adding to pupils' success and enjoyment. Visits are thoughtfully planned: for instance, Year 6 put their map reading skills into practice when studying rivers during their visit to the Lake District. Provision to promote pupils' awareness of health and safety is strong and has led to the school achieving the Healthy School award. The range of school clubs attracts many pupils and enables them to develop aesthetic and sporting skills.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe in school and trust adults to look after them and sort out any problems. They say that since the introduction of the worry box and playground pals, instances of bullying are rare and are dealt with fairly and swiftly. Systems to track pupils' progress in science are relatively new and have yet to have an impact on improving standards and achievement. The recently introduced targets in English and mathematics motivate pupils well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by effective individual education plans. Those with particular gifts or talents work regularly with pupils of similar ability from neighbouring schools, and this extends their skills in problem solving. Children in Reception are well prepared by a number of visits to the school and knowing they will have a Year 6 buddy to help them to settle in. Child protection procedures are in place and the school meets the latest guidelines on safeguarding children. Parents are very happy with the care provided. 'My children are so lucky to come to Highfield' is a sentiment reflected by many parents.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and two other senior leaders have effected considerable improvements in standards, achievement and provision. Each has pursued their brief rigorously. As a result, there have been considerable improvements in the Foundation Stage, in pupils' standards in English and in ICT. Most recently the curriculum for science has been enhanced and there are rigorous systems for target setting in English.

The headteacher and governors have not been afraid to take tough action to eliminate weaknesses in provision and to demand high standards of all who work in the school. There has been a prudent step-by-step approach to improvement. This means that faster progress has been made in eliminating relative weaknesses in writing and in the quality of teaching and learning than in, for example, enhancing pupils' achievements in science or in the relative performance of girls.

The headteacher provides a strong lead in forging effective partnerships with local schools, with parents and with the local community, all of which enhance pupils' personal development and their curriculum and promote better teaching. By leading all pupils in Years 3 to 6 on a daily run during the afternoon break, the headteacher actively encourages them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Rigorous checks are made on the quality of teaching and learning and professional development is closely linked to these evaluations and to other identified priorities for improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

Thank you for making us so welcome during the days we spent in your school. We very much enjoyed our visit to your school. It is providing you with a good education.

What is good about your school?

- It is obvious that you enjoy school and get on well together. The playground pal system and the reading buddies really help the older children to get to know the younger ones better.
- You have good teachers who help you learn well, especially in English.
- There are many exciting things for you to do both in lessons and outside the classroom.
- All the adults who work with you look after you very well and make sure that you feel safe. You have a lovely bright and airy school in which to work and play.
- The headteacher and other senior teachers have helped the school to improve a lot recently and have a really clear idea about how to make it even better.

So that you do even better we have asked the school to:

- make sure that teachers check up on how you are getting on in science, just as they do in reading and writing, so that you all make better progress in the subject and reach the highest standards possible;
- make sure that girls do as well as the boys.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection of your school. We hope that you continue to really enjoy school and do very well with your work.