

Heighington Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114223
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	289842
Inspection dates	22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr Geoffrey Yates

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	257

Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Trevor Kirkley
Headteacher	Mr Neil Parker
Date of previous school inspection	March 2001
School address	Hopelands Heighington Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 6PH
Telephone number	01325 300326
Fax number	01325 308679

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector for one day.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and serves a rural area of mostly private housing in a village setting. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A below average number of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning to speak English. Overall attainment on entry to the school is average. The school has won many awards; they include the Sports Active award, Healthy Schools award and Artsmark award.

The inspector investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching and learning, care, guidance and support and the impact of leadership and management with particular emphasis on the use of assessment, standards in writing and on provision in the Foundation Stage. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, observation of the school at work, interviews with senior members of staff and pupils, and the parents' questionnaires. Some 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 its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils excel in all they do. Parents are overwhelming positive about all aspects of school life. One parent sums up the views of many by stating that, 'This school is excellent. The facilities are very good and all members of staff exude enthusiasm and very caring attitudes.' The school fully achieves the aims of its mission statement, 'our vision for our school is one that consistently provides an education that compares with the very best in the country.' National test results in English, mathematics and science over recent years show that pupils' achievement is outstanding. The main reason for the school's success is its unending and relentless quest to improve on previous best. A combination of outstanding leadership and management, highly effective teaching and learning and a very well planned curriculum and other activities that meet the range of pupils' interests underpins everything the school does. Outstanding care including robust safeguarding procedures, guidance and support contribute greatly to the pupils' academic and personal success. Exceptionally positive relationships ensure that all pupils feel safe and that there is someone to turn to if help is needed. All staff show a high degree of commitment to the pupils in their care.

Pupils make outstanding progress and standards are well above the national average at the end of both key stages. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress. Children start school with average standards overall. By the time they enter Year 1, they exceed national expectations in all areas of learning. This is because of the very wide range of well planned learning experiences provided in the Foundation Stage, in the classroom and in the outside area. There is a very good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities.

The school builds on this very good start so that by the end of Year 2 standards are well above average at all levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The school ensures that pupils continue to make rapid progress in Years 3 to 6, with test results showing well above average results in English, mathematics and science. This is especially so in English, where in the 2006 tests over 70% of pupils exceeded the standard expected for their age. The school has compelling evidence to support its assessments that standards by the end of both key stages will be at least as high this year. A major success has been the school leadership initiative to raise writing standards for higher attaining pupils. In 2004, the school was rightly concerned that relatively few pupils attained above average standards in writing. Decisive leadership actions, including an insistence that pupils are given regular opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects, precise target setting and the use of drama to reinforce the curriculum have been highly effective. In the 2006 national tests over half of the Year 6 cohort achieved above average levels in writing. What is very apparent across the school is the high quality of writing found in all subjects, suitably celebrated through displays in the school hall. For example, in music pupils write about their experiences of singing with a madrigal group and in physical education pupils write high quality accounts of the work they did with a sports coach.

Pupils are very aware of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and understand, for example, the reasons why they are not allowed to bring sweets and confectionary to

school. There are very many opportunities for them to take part in sporting activities, and levels of participation are high. The pupils demonstrate a high degree of self-confidence and self-esteem, which enables them to behave outstandingly well and really enjoy the wide range of opportunities the school provides, including residential visits. The school's Penny Whistle group is proud to play for an audience. The high level of enjoyment can be seen in above average attendance levels. The school takes every opportunity to involve pupils in the community. For example, the school's folk dance team performs for town shoppers and at other functions when asked to do so. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and know there is someone to talk to if they have a problem. They are proud to take on responsibilities including serving as school council members and play leaders.

The curriculum meets pupils' needs exceptionally well through carefully tailored provision that makes learning very interesting inside the classroom and in the outside areas. The leadership team, in its quest to improve on previous best, has ensured outside play provision has been improved and is now an integral part of the school's work and that staff have the confidence to integrate it into all aspects of pupils' learning. The progress pupils make throughout the school is the result of outstanding teaching that caters thoroughly for all pupils' needs. The headteacher ensures that all members of staff have up-to-date assessment information to enable them to plan work that is differentiated very well. The school's innovative use of teachers' subject skills ensures that learning experiences are of a high quality in all subjects. Major strengths in teaching include excellent use of target setting and marking to involve pupils in their own learning, high quality relationships and very high expectations. The use of a drama specialist with classes across the school enhances the quality of the work children produce. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are involved fully in all activities and receive very good support.

Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that all previous inspection issues have been addressed and that the school has moved from strength to strength. The school's accurate self-evaluation in bringing about continuous improvement ensures that the school knows itself well. The headteacher's rigorous monitoring has led to appropriate actions being taken to ensure that the school meets challenging targets and maintains high levels of achievement. The focus on three key areas for development every year ensures that the school is never complacent. The headteacher inspires in everyone pride in their achievements and a desire to do even better. Governors play a full part in the school's leadership and management. For example, governors are linked to subject areas and provide evaluative reports back to the full governing body. The headteacher and the school's senior management team are successful in providing the highest quality academic and personal education for each child. As such, the school is in a position of considerable strength to improve even further. It provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant issues for improvement.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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

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.



24 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Heighington Church of England Primary School, DL5 6PH

What a wonderful school you have. Thank you for the friendly welcome you all gave me when I visited the school recently. I really enjoyed my time with you and seeing some of you in lessons, even if it was only for a short time. I would have loved to have become one of the pirates in the Reception class outside area. I was very impressed by the school's Penny Whistle group's rendition of the folk song 'The leaving of Liverpool.'

I promised the school council that I would let you know what I thought. I am pleased to tell you that your school is one of the very best I have been in and that you attend a really outstanding school. You do outstandingly well in lessons and in tests because you work hard and understand the importance of this for the future. I agree with you that your teachers and other adults make lessons very interesting and that you receive all the help you need.

Your behaviour is excellent and I was very impressed with how polite you were. You were all very busy and active at lunchtime and you benefit from large playgrounds and the wonderful reading area that has been created outside near the car park. You told me that you feel safe in school and that if problems occur an adult will sort it out quickly when you tell them about it. The school council is very busy on your behalf and members enjoy being able to take new things forward to make life better for you.

Keep on working hard and as a result you can carry on playing a major part in ensuring that your school continues to be highly regarded by all who come into contact with it.

Yours sincerely

Geoffrey Yates
Lead Inspector