



Heather Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119926
Local Authority Leicestershire
Inspection number 291572
Inspection date 25 September 2006
Reporting inspector Doris Bell

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Main Street
School category	Community		Heather
Age range of pupils	4-11		Coalville LE67 2QP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01530 260257
Number on roll (school)	97	Fax number	01530 260257
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Simon Watson
		Headteacher	Martin Turnham
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small primary school has had a significant turnover of staff in recent years, including a new headteacher. The area it serves has some social and economic disadvantages. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average and only a small minority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The school does not have a nursery, although it has close links with the on-site pre-school group. Pupils' attainment on entry fluctuates from year to year but it is usually below that expected for their age. All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, as is the overall effectiveness of the school, including the quality of teaching and its leadership and management. Teaching and progress are good in the Foundation Stage. Standards are broadly average in all year groups. The headteacher's drive and clarity of vision has provided the school with an accurate view of what it does well and what it needs to do to improve. Wholly focused on accelerating pupils' learning, this understanding has given the school a strong sense of purpose that is shared by staff and governors. It has resulted in most pupils making good progress in the past year. However, although pupils are catching up on learning they missed previously, gaps in their learning remain, particularly in mathematics and writing.

Teachers know their pupils well and the planning of work takes good account of the pupils' different ages and stages of learning. These features, and the strategic use of well briefed teaching assistants, are successfully accelerating pupils' learning. However, worksheets are used too often, limiting the opportunities pupils have to write at length, or to use their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects. This hinders progress, especially for more able pupils. The otherwise satisfactory curriculum does not provide enough guidance for teachers on these matters. However, it promotes healthy lifestyles well and contributes to the pupils' good understanding of how to keep safe, and to care for and respect themselves, others and the environment.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and they enjoy school, including its good range of extra-curricular clubs and other activities. Pupils contribute well to the community and readily accept responsibility. All of this, alongside their satisfactory progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), prepares them adequately for the future. Pupils are well cared for, guided and supported and their progress is tracked well. However, despite recent improvements, the targets set for them are not always precise enough, pupils do not always understand them, and teachers' marking rarely refers to them. This limits their usefulness as a tool to improve learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics by improving the teaching of practical skills and their use in problem solving.
- Provide explicit guidance on promoting literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects and cut down the use of worksheets that prevent pupils, especially the more able, from using their extended writing skills.
- Make pupils' targets easier for them to understand and ensure that teachers' marking shows them the steps they need to take to reach them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Their achievement in the rest of the school is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average at the end of each key stage, including the Reception Year. Pupils' achievement and standards have both been greatly affected by long-term staff absences. These are now resolved but there remain gaps in pupils' practical and problem solving skills in mathematics and in their extended writing skills. However, almost all pupils made good progress last year as a result of what the school did to improve writing and mathematics. Pupils do not readily write at length and their understanding of how to do so in different styles and for different purposes is relatively limited. They also miss opportunities to consolidate their writing skills in other subjects because the over-use of worksheets in, for example, science, history and geography, prevents them from doing this. While affecting progress overall, it particularly limits that of more able pupils, preventing them from working independently and taking increasing responsibility for their own learning.

The school sets itself challenging targets based on its accurate assessment of individual pupils' progress and it works very hard to reach them. It did not do so this year because of the particular circumstances affecting the performance of a small group of pupils at the time of the national tests. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' good personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, begins in the Foundation Stage and is evident in the pupils' good behaviour and the good relationships throughout the school. Pupils enjoy school, take an active part in school life, and readily accept responsibility, for example, as school councillors and house captains. They are not yet fully confident about taking responsibility for managing or organising their own learning or determining for themselves how to improve their work, as there are few opportunities for them to do so. Pupils contribute well to the community, for example, through fundraising for charity and their involvement in village events. They know how to keep themselves safe and are confident about approaching staff if they need help. They understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, make sensible food choices and participate wholeheartedly in sporting activities. Alongside their satisfactory progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT, all of this prepares them adequately for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The pupils' overall satisfactory progress is the result of satisfactory teaching over time. Teaching and learning are getting better because the headteacher keeps a close check on them and has led improvements in planning and the use of assessment in it. Planning now takes good account of the age and ability range in each class and builds on pupils' earlier learning. Teachers record and track pupils' progress accurately, assessing their learning and responding well to their needs in lessons. This was observed when a teacher skilfully changed the way she was teaching to match the changing needs of individual pupils as the lesson proceeded. Within this positive picture, teachers' marking is still too variable. Comments rarely refer to pupils' targets or make clear to the pupils what they must do to improve. This is true of all subjects and means opportunities are missed to extend and consolidate literacy and numeracy skills or show pupils how they might reach their targets in different subjects. It is compounded by the over-use of worksheets in, for example, science, history and geography. Teachers use support staff well to help different groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for the Reception Year is well planned and good account is taken of the needs of the Year 1 pupils taught in this class. The curriculum for the rest of the school is satisfactory and it includes a good range of enrichment activities in and outside the normal school day. The teaching of French and instrumental music tuition give an added dimension to the curriculum. The good range of visits and visitors, the school's good involvement in inter-school sporting activities, and the importance placed on helping pupils to keep safe and healthy all contribute well to pupils' learning and personal development. However, while it is under review to establish better links between subjects, the curriculum does not provide enough guidance for teachers as to how to do this or how to promote literacy and numeracy skills at every opportunity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good care, guidance and support given to pupils contribute effectively to their personal development and well-being, and to their improving academic achievement. Pupils are well known to staff and they are helped to overcome personal and learning difficulties wherever possible, as well as through the school's good links with external agencies and with parents. The vast majority of parents praise the school highly for what it does. All pupils have targets to help them improve and these are shared with parents. The targets for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are specific and measurable and contribute to the pupils' progress. For other pupils, the targets

are not always clear enough and pupils do not always fully understand them or how to achieve them. This limits their usefulness in helping pupils to become more involved in assessing and improving their own learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

While leadership and management are satisfactory overall, the headteacher's good leadership has successfully improved the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in the past year. As staffing stabilised, self-evaluation, in which governors are satisfactorily involved, has become more rigorous, as have the checks made on teaching and learning. This has led to the accurate identification of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, which are clearly stated in the well considered improvement plan. Improving mathematics and writing is rightly given top priority, and staff development and key staff responsibilities are closely matched to it. The headteacher has also led the improvements in processes for the setting of targets and teachers' marking. However, these are still not fully understood by all staff and pupils. Consequently, their impact on pupils' achievement has not been as rapid as the school hoped. In the headteacher's words, the school is 'fighting the fight' on this and on developing its provision for more able pupils. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, despite the ups and downs the school has faced. This, along with pupils' improving progress, shows that the school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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	3

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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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.

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	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
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

Heather Primary School, Main Street, Heather, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 2QP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us about your work. We enjoyed hearing what you had to say and we noted that you enjoy school and find everyone helpful and friendly. You told us you would like a bigger hall and better classrooms. Your school is working on this. You go to a school that is satisfactory. That means it does some things well but there are things it needs to do better. I have listed some of these things for you:

- Your progress, which is satisfactory, is improving because the headteacher is keeping a close check on how well you are doing and he is helping your teachers to help you to do better.
- The school cares a great deal for you. You behave well, care for each other and the environment. You also like and respect the adults with whom you work, confident that they will help you if need be.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and of why it is important to keep fit and healthy.

We have asked your school to help you make even faster progress by:

- Giving you more practical work to do in mathematics and helping you to use this knowledge to solve problems more easily.
- Showing teachers how they can give you more opportunities to use your literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects, and cutting back on worksheets that stop you from doing extended writing when you are capable of doing it.
- Making your targets easier for you to understand and checking that when they mark your work, your teachers always show you what you need to do to improve it

We hope that you will continue to enjoy learning and to be as enthusiastic and caring as you are now when you grow up.