

Highgate Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120877
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291892
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2007
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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	72
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elizabeth Dyer
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Holden
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001
School address	Gaywood Road King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 2PS
Telephone number	01553 772496
Fax number	01553 768126

Age group	4–7
Inspection dates	27–28 March 2007
Inspection number	291892

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

There are three classes in this small infant school. The school serves an area of social disadvantage. When they start school in Reception, the attainment of many children is very low. Nearly all pupils are White British. A small proportion is from other ethnic minority backgrounds and around ten per cent speak languages other than English. Half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school part-way through their education is well above average. The school has attained the National Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has many strengths and some outstanding features. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Since her appointment three years ago she has worked hard to fulfil the school's aim of 'providing a top quality education'. One major success has been the establishment of close bonds with parents. All pupils and their parents receive a warm welcome. One parent summed this up, 'I feel the school is there as much for us parents as for the pupils.'

Teaching is good and some is outstanding. There is a large number of skilled classroom assistants who make a strong contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. All groups of pupils make good progress and some pupils make outstanding progress. Although standards are below average by the end of Year 2, they are steadily getting closer to national averages. Children settle happily in the Reception class, where the quality of provision is good. Pupils enjoy school and are bursting with enthusiasm for learning. They are full of energy and teachers are good at channelling this into productive activities. Reading, writing and number skills are taught rigorously. The school has introduced an excellent system for teaching pupils the links between letter shapes and the sounds. Many pupils have a limited vocabulary and do not understand the meaning of everyday words. Teachers explain words carefully but they do not always spend enough time introducing a wide enough range of words in order to extend pupils' vocabulary as fully as possible. Pupils listen intently to teachers but, when there are no visual aids such as pictures to look at, they remember little about what they have been told.

Personal development and well-being are good and pupils behave well. Sound foundations are laid for their future learning and working lives. Care, support and guidance are outstanding. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. They have an excellent understanding of how to eat sensibly, stay healthy and keep fit. The school makes good use of targets in literacy and numeracy to help them understand what they need to do to improve. Attendance is satisfactory.

The curriculum is good. It is relevant to pupils' needs and is supplemented by a good range of extra activities. Parents are delighted with the education provided for their children. Governors work closely with staff and monitor the school's performance thoroughly. Finances are managed well and the school provides good value for money. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and it has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers and teaching assistants grasp every opportunity to build pupils' understanding of words, extend their vocabulary and help them remember what has been taught.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As a matter of policy the school employs an exceptionally large number of support staff and makes sure that they are thoroughly trained. The skilled adults in each class support pupils well so that all, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who speak languages other than English, achieve well. On entry to the Reception class the attainment of many children is very low, especially in communication, language and literacy skills, as well as

in social and personal development. Children quickly learn the class routines and learning is rapid. Although they make good progress, there are so many gaps in their prior learning that few attain the nationally expected goals for their age by the end of the Reception year. Joined handwriting is taught from the start and handwriting is developing well. Children develop a good understanding of the sounds represented by letters. Pupils continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. Some make outstanding progress and attain standards that exceed national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 2 are below average but there is an improving trend.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

From their very first day in school, pupils receive regular praise and encouragement. This boosts their self-esteem and helps them to become well behaved and confident learners. Pupils are always ready for fun but know where the boundaries are and behave sensibly. They are shown great respect by all adults. The school council takes its responsibilities seriously and helps to improve the school by, for example, establishing a 'friendship stop' in the playground where children who feel lonely can stand until they find a friend to play with. Healthy eating is encouraged by the provision of fruit snacks, well-balanced meals and investigations into what should be in a healthy packed lunch box. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They acquire many skills useful to them in later life, including how to use computers to support their learning. Pupils are well aware of how to look after themselves and stay safe. They are sensitive to the needs of others and raise a great deal of money for charities. Attendance is below average but this is largely because families move out of the area without letting the school know and this affects attendance records. The school is doing all that it can to encourage good attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are particularly aware of the importance of developing reading and writing skills. Every day pupils move into small groups, each supported by an adult, and are trained systematically, mainly through constant repetition, in phonics. By Year 2 pupils say, 'I know all my 44 phonemes'. This helps them to make good progress in reading, spelling and writing. Relationships are excellent and relaxed so that pupils are confident in offering opinions or asking for help. Teachers work hard to make lessons stimulating and fun. Pupils listen carefully to teachers and if the activity is linked to pictures or some physical activity, learning is effective. Pupils often give the impression of listening intently to teachers but when asked about what they remember it becomes clear that little has been retained. A good start has been made to improving listening skills by encouraging children to reflect on what they hear and to build colourful pictures in their minds to help them remember. Teachers have begun to use the new interactive white boards effectively but their full potential in bringing learning to life has yet to be realised. Teachers are successful at stimulating pupils and encouraging high levels of motivation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well balanced and enriched by a wide range of additional activities. In order to meet the particular needs of pupils, there is a strong emphasis on teaching key skills in literacy and numeracy. The school provides a broad curriculum that gives pupils a well-rounded education. In the Reception class a wealth of purposeful and imaginative learning opportunities are organised, both in the classroom and outdoors, and imaginative play is well developed. There is good provision for personal and health education and good links with the local further education college so that children can take part in activities such as brick-laying. Specialist teachers for dance, drama, sport, French and music enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding feature of the school. The school ensures that the care and welfare of pupils comes before anything else. Classroom assistants are particularly good at dealing with children who arrive at school in a disturbed or distressed state and quickly calm and comfort them. Teachers and support staff are sensitive to the needs of each individual pupil. Staff are accessible and encourage pupils and their parents to talk to them about any worries. Before they start school, teachers visit children and their parents and this helps to forge strong relationships between home and school. Child protection procedures are in place and are clearly understood by all staff. From the Reception class onwards great emphasis is placed on developing pupils' self-esteem and independence. Pupils receive excellent guidance about how to improve their work. They have clear targets in their exercise books and on their 'target ladders' and teachers give all pupils frequent praise for reaching their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher sets the tone. She has been highly successful in building an effective team of teachers and support staff who share a commitment to exploring ways to raise standards. She cares deeply about every pupil and has succeeded in establishing a learning ethos in which every child can flourish. The accommodation is bright and beautifully decorated. Pupils appreciate this, saying, 'Ours is a colourful school.' Resources are of good quality and used well. The school analyses each pupils' performance carefully, especially in literacy and numeracy, and sets up specific programmes to support those who are not making as much progress as expected. This is having a positive impact on raising standards. Governors are well informed and they bring a range of expertise to support the management. The school battles against challenging circumstances, such as high pupil mobility, low attainment on entry and some pupils who are difficult to manage but it is successful in its aim of creating a cheerful, relaxed environment.

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

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

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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

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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	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

29 March 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Highgate Infant School, Gaywood Road, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 2PS

I really enjoyed my short visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. I thought that you might like to hear what I thought of Highgate Infant School. There are lots of good things that make your school so lovely. Here are some of them.

- Your headteacher has worked very hard to make your school so bright and colourful.
- Rainbow time, when you learn your sounds each day, is excellent and you are getting really good at reading, writing and spelling.
- The teachers and assistants take good care of you and look after you extremely well.
- All the grown ups work hard to help you to learn and make good progress.
- You do interesting things, such as the children in reception building walls with real bricks and mortar.
- You are full of fun and enjoy laughing.
- Your behaviour is good and you enjoy learning new things.
- You know how to stay safe, look after yourselves and keep healthy.

I think that there are two things you could do help you in your learning.

- Sometimes you do not remember what you have been told. Mrs Holden, the teachers and I think that when you are listening you should try to build colourful pictures in your mind about what you are hearing and that this might help you to remember more.
- We also think that you should find out about lots more words that are in the dictionary and that you should find out what they all mean.

I wish you every success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

All best wishes

John Messer

Lead Inspector