

Heacham Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121191
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	292047
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr James Anderson
Headteacher	Mrs Nicola Darley
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001
School address	College Drive Heacham King's Lynn Norfolk PE31 7EJ
Telephone number	01485571013
Fax number	01485572367

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school which serves the coastal village of Heacham and surrounding areas. The vast majority of pupils are White British and their first language is English. The majority start school with standards that are below average when compared nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of educational need, is above average. Following the reorganisation of primary education in the area, the school is experiencing falling rolls which is resulting in pupils in Years 3 and 4 being taught in mixed age classes. The school has been awarded Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Heacham Junior School is a good school. It is moving forward despite the constraints caused by falling rolls, as seen in the good progress that pupils make. This has been made possible by good leadership and management of the school. Focused forward planning, involving all staff, has developed effective leadership at several levels. This has been central to the good progress that the school has made since the last inspection and shows its good capacity to improve further. This is aided by governors who are now robustly overseeing and guiding the school's performance.

The staff's strong team spirit strengthens the daily life of the school by creating an ethos where pupils care for each other and lend a helping hand, whether in the classroom or playground. Their good personal development is demonstrated by their good behaviour and attendance. Pupils speak with pride about their school and the breadth of education that it provides. This is underpinned by good welfare and health and safety systems so that pupils feel safe and know support is there for those who are troubled. Care, guidance and support of pupils are good overall, with all pupils knowing their targets and how to move on in their learning. More detailed tracking of pupils' progress is leading to accurate targets being set which enable quicker progress. However, the levels achieved by pupils are not recorded in a way that enables staff to identify promptly the rate of pupils' progress.

Standards in 2007 are average in English and mathematics compared with the above average standards attained in 2006. Nonetheless, the school was very close to achieving its challenging targets and these results represent good progress against pupils' below average levels of attainment on entry. Thus, achievement is good and standards are average. The standards reached also reflect the higher proportion of pupils in the year group who have learning difficulties. A higher percentage of pupils than nationally have exceeded expected levels in English this year but fewer reached higher levels in mathematics.

The good progress made through school owes much to good quality teaching. The purpose of lessons is always made clear to pupils. This, together with good use of a variety of teaching styles and methods, in particular, information and communication technology (ICT) helps pupils make good progress. Teachers plan together in year groups setting challenging tasks matched to pupils' capabilities. However, in mixed year classes, the match of work to ability is not always close enough.

The school provides a good curriculum which adds to pupils' achievement, personal development and enjoyment of school. Learning comes to life because it is increasingly taught through topics which enable wider learning opportunities, whilst retaining literacy and numeracy as the focus of all activities. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to learn French throughout the school. Visits, which extend learning in subjects such as history, are hugely popular as are the wide range of out of hours clubs and activities. Music is a strength and takes the school regularly into the community, developing pupils' skills for adulthood as well as their musical talents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that tasks, particularly in mixed age group classes, are closely matched to the learning needs of pupils to enable standards to rise further.
- Refine the systems for recording information about the progress that pupils are making so that their rate of progress can be more easily identified by staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well through the school from their starting points. In 2006, the standards reached by the end of Year 6 were above average in mathematics and science and exceptionally high in English. The 2007 national test results are in line with the national average but show pupils' good progress from their lower starting points and reflect the higher percentage of pupils with learning difficulties. Information collected by the school and observations of lessons during the inspection, demonstrate that pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress through the school. Information about the rate of progress being made by pupils is, however, not presently recorded clearly enough for staff to be able to identify promptly the levels of achievement. The school was very close to meeting its challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, it reflects the school's aims and ethos, and encourages them to feel happy and to do well. Pupils enjoy school as seen in their above average attendance. Relationships and behaviour are good. Pupils make friends, work together well, and older pupils support younger children by being 'buddies' to them. They follow school routines and act sensibly and safely. Their good understanding of how to stay healthy is influencing their actions so that many take part in extra sport and exercise activities which help to raise their fitness levels. Members of the school council reflect the views of others accurately. Its work brings about change, such as improvements to the school grounds which benefit the beautiful wildlife. Pupils also contribute well to the community, for example, by taking part in community events and raising money for charities. These examples show how the school is helping pupils to acquire good skills which will support them effectively in their next stage of schooling and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. As a result, pupils make good progress. This is helped by a supportive and business like learning environment. All lessons make clear the purpose of learning and teachers revisit objectives regularly. Teachers plan in year groups and offer a variety of relevant activities. However, in the mixed Year 3 and 4 lessons, activities are not always matched closely enough to the very varied ability levels at which pupils are working. Teachers use different learning styles to motivate pupils. This includes the use of interactive white boards which pupils find great fun. Increasing opportunities for pupils to learn for themselves and in pairs and groups stimulate their interest and ownership of learning. Marking is usually very helpful to pupils because it tells them what they have achieved and what to do next to make further progress. Homework extends classroom learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum encourages pupils to tackle tasks with enthusiasm. Recent curriculum development has resulted in good links being made between subjects and has encouraged fun

in learning. This integrated approach helps to motivate pupils because they have opportunities to practise their skills. Staff are aware of the need to develop this further. Learning is now more active and includes the use of the school grounds. Visits also encourage a more 'hands on' approach and develop pupils' personal and social skills. The successful personal, social and health education programme ensures that pupils know how to keep safe and healthy, learn to get on with others and contribute well to the community. A good range and number of popular clubs help to develop new interests and extend pupils' skills. Further strengths include the provision of French for all pupils, the choir and the improved use of ICT.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good care, support and guidance help pupils to develop into happy and confident learners. Because of the caring school ethos and good relationships, pupils feel able to turn to someone if they have a problem or ask for help with their learning. As one pupil said, 'Teachers pick up on it if you're struggling, then help you'. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported by staff so that they can be fully involved in school activities and make good progress. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Staff are quick to identify any pupil who is failing to thrive and act on their concerns, using the expertise of other agencies when required. Targets, particularly in literacy and numeracy, help pupils to develop their existing strengths and show them the next steps in learning. The full effect of this target setting is yet to be seen. Academic guidance is good and pupils say that their 'learning ladders' help them to assess what they have achieved and motivates them well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher is providing strong and decisive leadership and has acted effectively to raise the performance of the school since the last inspection. This is evidenced by the good progress that pupils are now making through the school and the improved curriculum. There is a great sense of teamwork among the staff because they are involved in planning the school's work. Professional development opportunities match the needs identified in the school improvement plan so that, for example subject leaders have the skills to monitor and evaluate the work of their areas effectively in order to improve progress. Thus the school has good capacity to improve. The performance of governors has improved significantly since the last inspection because they have much greater knowledge of the school and monitor its work regularly. Value for money is good.

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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	2
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	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?	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?	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

9 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heacham Junior School, Heacham, PE31 7EJ

Thank you for making Mrs Frith and me so welcome when we visited you recently and for your politeness and friendliness towards us. We really enjoyed meeting and talking to you about your school and hearing about the many interesting things that happen there. This letter will tell you the judgements that we made.

Your school is good. You are making good progress in your learning. This is because your teachers teach you well and make learning interesting and often fun. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the consideration that you show to each other in lessons and at break times. This creates a lovely atmosphere in school. You have a good headteacher and hardworking staff who are making sure that school prepares you well for when you are older. We saw this in the responsibilities that you are given and the opportunities that you have to contribute ideas for improving your school. Your field is idyllic and it was lovely to hear how you have worked to make this a wildlife area. The school council is doing a good job! Well done also for taking so seriously the need for healthy lifestyles and working hard to keep fit. You appreciate the out of hours activities the teachers run for you and the visits, which you say are really interesting. We hope that you enjoyed your Victorian day out.

There are ways in which your school can be even better. We have asked Mrs Darley to check that the tasks which you are set in mixed age classes always match closely the levels at which you are working. This will help you to make good progress in every lesson that you have. We are pleased that the school is collecting a lot of information about the progress that you are making. We have asked that this is organised in a more easily understood way so that teachers can see very quickly the progress that you are making.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Lynne Blakelock

Lead Inspector