

Heathfields Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124158
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292909
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2007
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	
School	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eddie Dix
Headteacher	Amanda Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2002
School address	Saxon Close Wilnecote Tamworth B77 5LU
Telephone number	01827 475065
Fax number	01827 475065

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves the local community, although some pupils come from further afield as the school has a good reputation for its provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. There are more of these pupils than one would expect in a school of this size. There are areas of significant economic deprivation in the area. Almost all pupils are White British, and all speak English at home. The headteacher has been on sick leave for more than three months and the assistant headteacher is acting as headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has an enviable reputation and this is no surprise as it is a good school. Pupils achieve well through the school. Parents say such things as, 'We are extremely impressed as our child is full of enthusiasm about all he learns.' A measure of its success is that children start with levels of skills and knowledge well below those expected for children of their age, but by the time they leave, they have reached broadly average standards in most subjects, although standards in writing and speaking are below those in reading and mathematics. Children make good progress in the Reception classes because the quality of education they receive is good. One of the major reasons that the school is so successful is good leadership and management. A number of effective strategies have been introduced in recent years which have led to better progress for pupils. For example, initiatives have been started to raise standards in writing and these are resulting in pupils beginning to make much better progress. The school is in safe hands during the absence of the headteacher as the acting headteacher and the staff team are continuing to take the school forward. A particular development has been the realisation that to raise standards still further, pupils' speaking skills need to be developed. At this stage a strategy to do this has not been put in place.

Another one of the key strengths of the school is the outstanding care, guidance and support for pupils. Not only do all staff treat pupils' welfare and safety as a high priority, but there are excellent systems to check on pupils' progress so that none falls behind. Additionally, the exceptionally good links that have been forged with other professionals provide very effective support and guidance for pupils. For example, the school has a strong commitment to inclusion and has involved expert help to enable pupils with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities to succeed. All this is resulting in pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. They are extremely well behaved, work very hard and thoroughly enjoy school, saying that this is because, 'teachers make lessons fun'.

The major reason for pupils' good progress is good teaching. Teachers provide a broad range of activities that interest pupils and encourage them to work hard at their learning. The teaching of writing and speaking skills, though, is not as effective as the teaching of many other aspects. A notable feature of the good curriculum offered is the extras provided. The wide range of visits and visitors and the enrichment clubs on Fridays, involving all pupils, are good examples of the many opportunities that benefit pupils' personal development. Teaching assistants are very effective in helping pupils' learning, particularly for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The school has thorough procedures in place to evaluate its effectiveness, which involve all staff and governors, as well as taking account of regular surveys of parents and pupils. Bearing this in mind, along with the good progress made since the previous inspection and the shared drive to raise standards, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Put in place a structured programme to develop pupils' speaking skills.
- Raise standards in writing to the levels of those in reading and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school with very low standards in some areas of communication, language and number development. They make good progress in the Reception classes and reach the expected standards in some areas, such as personal, social and physical development, by the time they start in Year 1. However, standards in the key skills of literacy and numeracy are still significantly below national expectations.

Good progress continues through Years 1 and 2 and pupils reach average standards by the time they leave. Despite effective strategies being put in place to address the weaknesses in writing, standards are still lower than those in reading and mathematics. The school has recognised that to raise standards further, standards of speaking need to be improved. However, a structured programme has not been put in place to ensure, for example, that pupils respond with full sentences and use more complex vocabulary. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress relative to their abilities as a result of the good plans made for their learning and the good support that they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They really enjoy coming to school and say that 'school is fun' and, consequently, attendance has improved notably. However, it is only average as a significant number of parents take their children on holiday during term time. Pupils develop very good social skills in social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) lessons, through which they learn strategies to cope with difficult situations and feelings. Pupils gain considerable confidence as a result of activities such as the joint musical productions with the high school. Pupils care for each other and develop very tolerant and helpful attitudes. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. For example, they enjoy fund raising for charities and singing carols for, and sending harvest parcels to, the local home for the elderly. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility, school councillors taking their role seriously. Through their efforts, they have enjoyed improving playtime for everyone.

Pupils know how to stay safe, play happily together and know someone will help if they have problems. Bullying is rare and pupils know what to do if it happens. They are putting into practice their very good understanding of healthy eating and the importance of exercise. Pupils' well developed social skills, working in groups for instance, and their good progress in developing basic literacy and numeracy skills are providing a good grounding for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are well organised and their lessons are carefully planned to meet the needs of the range of abilities in their classes. Teachers use the very thorough systems of assessment well to ensure that pupils are working in the correct groups and are therefore suitably challenged. Pupils appreciate these challenges and work well together. There are, though, occasions in lessons when pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet and some are not then actively engaged in learning. There is also insufficient concentration on developing pupils' speaking skills.

Although the strategies to improve pupils' writing are clearly being used well in lessons, these have not yet had a full impact in raising standards.

In the Reception classes, there is a good balance between activities led by the teacher and those which children can choose themselves. All these activities are clearly focused on the particular learning themes for the day and these children are therefore learning well.

A particular strength of teaching is the work of the teaching assistants. They are skilled and successfully help and encourage pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to work hard and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Teachers are beginning to plan more activities which link subjects. Although this is relatively new, it is already having an impact in pupils' enjoyment and seeing the relevance of their learning. The school has identified pupils with particular gifts or talents and is providing suitably challenging work for them. The use of a wide range of well planned strategies provides extra support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The curriculum for children in the Reception classes is carefully planned so that it meets the particular needs of each child.

The range of enrichment activities is very good and caters for a broad range of interests. Pupils particularly enjoy their visits to the theatre, for example to see Jack and the Beanstalk, and to a farm and museum. Personal, social and health education is well planned and makes a particularly strong contribution to pupils' social and emotional development. There are excellent links with other schools and particularly the adjacent pre-school setting, which helps children settle quickly in to the Reception classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The welfare of pupils is central to the work of the school. Procedures to ensure the safety, security and health of the pupils are very thorough. There is a very caring and supportive ethos which results in pupils who are very happy, well motivated and enjoy their learning. The support provided for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties or disabilities is outstanding. Parents speak highly of the help they and their children receive. Very effective strategies to promote attendance have led to improvements although attendance is still average because of the number of family holidays taken during term time.

Systems for tracking pupils' progress are very detailed and the school is quick to identify and support pupils who are not making the progress expected of them. All pupils have individual learning targets. These are well matched to their ability and are regularly reviewed. Consequently, pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has a strong leadership team which has the confidence to continue the school's development during the absence of the headteacher. It has successfully built on procedures that have previously been implemented. For instance, the work started on raising standards in writing is beginning to have an impact. This has led to a realisation that, for this to be wholly

successful, standards in speaking need to be improved. A wide range of stakeholders is consulted to build an accurate analysis of where the school is at and this picture is regularly reviewed. Governors play a full role in this. They offer good support as they have good knowledge of the school.

Information on pupils' achievements are used well to analyse strengths of the school and areas for development. This resulted, for instance, in weaknesses in some aspects of mathematics being identified and effectively addressed, resulting in pupils' better performance in these areas. Parents recognise the strength of leadership and management and say such things as, 'The school is very well run and all staff are very approachable and ready to listen.'

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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?	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	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

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school this week. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing how much you enjoy school. Many of you told us how much fun you have while you are learning. You are lucky to come to this school as it is a good school.

These are the best things we found about your school:

- You are learning well and making good progress because your lessons are good and interesting.
- You behave really well and work hard in lessons.
- All grown-ups look after you very well, giving you good support to achieve well.
- Your headteacher and all the teachers know just what to do to make your school even better.
- There are lots of exciting things organised for you as well as your lessons; for example, the visitors who come to speak to you and the trips you go on.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to do these things so that you can learn even better:

- Help you to speak better, for instance using longer sentences and longer words.
- Help you to improve your writing so that it is as good as your reading and mathematics.

Best wishes and keep up the good work.