

Henley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124587
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	293043
Inspection date	10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Harmer Parr HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	106
Appropriate authority	Governing Body
Chair	Mr Steve Hazelwood
Headteacher	Ms Ann Waters
Date of previous school inspection	4 - 6 February 2002
School address	Ashbocking Road Henley Ipswich IP6 0QX
Telephone number	01473 831556
Fax number	01473 833092

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The following issues were investigated: the pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, and how well the school's leadership promotes high standards and good personal development. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, the pupils' work, discussion with them, the staff, some parents and a governor, and a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other 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 form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Henley is smaller than most primary schools. The majority of its pupils come from the Henley catchment area, but four in ten travel in from outside the neighbourhood. Very few are entitled to free school meals, and very few are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion identified by the school as having learning difficulties or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'The atmosphere in the school is excellent, everyone seems to know everyone else and there is a positive relationship across all the ages.'

This was the opinion of one of the many parents who responded to the questionnaire, and it summed up the views of most. Almost all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all the positive statements, with only four instances of disagreement with any of them: a very strong endorsement.

The school is distinctive. Parents spoken to during the inspection recognised the fact and some had chosen it for this very reason. It strongly promotes a family atmosphere, independent thinking and an international perspective. It does so by encouraging the pupils to be confident in themselves ("self-smart"), considerate to others ("people-smart") and aware of the wider view from beyond the UK. It also does so by giving them a wide variety of interesting and practical activities both within and beyond the classroom, or, as one parent put it, 'a chance to roll up their sleeves and get dirty'.

The pupils get a solid start to school life in the Foundation Stage, where they make good progress towards achieving the early learning goals. By ages 7 and 11, the majority reach or exceed the expected standard in English, mathematics and science as measured by national tests. Results in previous years suggest that pupils have tended to make the same amount of progress between those two testing points as similar pupils in other schools. The evidence of the inspection indicated a stronger profile of achievement than that suggested by previous tests, particularly in the case of faster-working pupils and those who have learning difficulties and disabilities. These pupils receive strong, individual support from very capable teachers and teaching assistants who know them well.

Assessment arrangements are in transition, as the school seeks to improve its ways of checking progress. Current records are comprehensive and detailed, but the school rightly believes that they can be used more effectively to influence, rather than simply record, progress. The main weakness is in assessing short-term progress, whether through a measurable lesson objective or through individual targets for the day, the week or the month. The pupils assess their own work, and often that of their peers, but sometimes lack precise criteria against which to judge it or a clear target which they are seeking to meet. As a result, the pace of learning over time can be slower for some pupils than it should be because of the lack of stepping stones to their longer-term targets.

A strength of the school is the way it fosters personal development and well-being. This does not happen by accident. The vast majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and enjoy school. They feel safe and secure because they are well looked after by staff who place emphasis on the individual. They know how to make healthy choices because they are given the knowledge and skills to do so. They make full use of the school grounds, including the highly unusual, thatched outdoor classroom, to explore and reflect, encouraged to do so by imaginative activities planned by the teachers.

They develop a wide perspective through the school's adoption of the International Primary Curriculum, which approaches issues through the viewpoint of different cultures. They strongly support each other, particularly through a highly regarded 'buddy system' where older children help and guide younger ones, deriving great benefit themselves as they do so. They are encouraged to be "Henley Thinkers" by the strong promotion of independence and individualism within the curriculum, and in the wide range of extracurricular activities and educational visits. Pupils contribute well to the school and the community in many ways, but the strong-mindedness the school is hoping to promote is not yet fully exploited. Currently, the work of the school council is insufficiently structured to draw out pupils' views on a range of issues which directly affect them; for example, the way they are taught and how it could be improved.

Care for the individual is a strong priority, reflected in detailed and responsive arrangements for child protection. The school is strongly aware of learning difficulties and disabilities, monitors them carefully and deals with them sensitively. Challenging behaviour is tackled in a way that a parent helper described as 'calm and assertive'. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on and take responsibility for their own behaviour, and are helped to do so by the supportive attitude of their peers. The school reports that its efforts to assess and provide for the complex difficulties of some pupils are occasionally compromised by a slow response from outside agencies.

The headteacher gives a very strong lead. She has developed the vision of a distinctive, caring, imaginative and outward-looking school, and been very successful in getting staff, pupils and parents to sign up to it. She has encouraged individualism and experimentation, and developed a highly cohesive team of staff and parents. Staff seek to improve, to try new approaches and, as in the case of two teaching assistants, to gain further qualifications. The school's view of its own effectiveness, as reflected in its self-evaluation form, was accurate. The school improvement plan reflects this analysis, choosing the right priorities. What is currently lacking is a clear sense of which priorities are the most important, and when, since all cannot be tackled simultaneously. Related to this weakness is a lack of measurable criteria by which progress can be judged at different points in time. In these circumstances it is difficult for governors and others to know what progress is being made towards the school's longer-term targets.

The school is at an interesting juncture, as new initiatives coincide with the need to review some time-honoured ways of working. The clear sense of direction and accurate self-assessment are ingredients which indicate that the capacity to improve is strong. The school needs to ensure that its arrangements for checking the pupils' and the school's progress in the shorter term are sufficiently robust to ensure that the pace of improvement is as fast as it can be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make greater use of short-term targets to help pupils, staff and parents assess progress on a regular basis.
- Develop observable or measurable criteria to evaluate the success of priorities and initiatives at agreed points.
- Structure the work of the school council to encourage a stronger contribution to improvement in the school.

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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
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	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
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	3
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 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

Leadership and management

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

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.

11 May 2007



Dear Children

Inspection of Henley Primary School

Thank you for your warm welcome and for being so helpful on the day I inspected your school. It was good to meet and talk with so many of you.

You go to a school that is interesting and different. Your amazing outdoor classroom makes it look different, and your lessons and all the extra activities and trips mean you get a lot of different experiences. So you are kept busy, inside the school and outside. You learn a lot about other countries, as well as this one. You learn in lots of different ways, and you have a lot of fun. Many of you told me how much you enjoy school, because you feel safe there, your friends and 'buddies' help you, and you get on well. Your parents told me all that too, and I agree.

There are some things that can be improved, and you can help. You do some interesting things through the school council, but you can get even more involved. You can make sure you put your views forward, and your teachers would welcome this. You can also ask for some targets to help you assess how well you are doing day to day and week to week. By the way, I asked the staff to do the same thing for the school, so that they know how well they are doing at different points as they tackle the priorities they have set.

You go to a good school. Like all schools, and all of us, it can always get better. With your help, I know it will. Good luck.

Yours sincerely

Harmer Parr
Her Majesty's Inspector