

Hexthorpe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130290
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	293618
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Clark

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs R Gill
Headteacher	Mrs C Lawson
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001
School address	Urban Road Hexthorpe Doncaster South Yorkshire DN4 0HH
Telephone number	01302 852245
Fax number	01302 857083

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Hexthorpe Primary school is larger than average in size. The majority of pupils are from an area of social and economic disadvantage and the percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is above average. Around 6% of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The main languages represented include Polish, Czech/Slovak and Urdu. A small percentage of pupils are cared for by the local authority. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. A majority of pupils start the Foundation Stage with attainment which is below the expected levels for their age and particularly low for communication, language and literacy.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Hexthorpe Primary is an outstanding school. The exceptional leadership of the headteacher and excellent support of the deputy headteacher and senior staff ensures that every one connected with the school feels valued and respected and successfully strives to give their best. Pupils' academic achievement and personal development are outstanding and they thoroughly enjoy themselves at school. The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate and based on high quality monitoring and evaluation of its performance that secures its continual success.

Pupils start the Foundation Stage with lower than average attainment. They get a very good start in the Foundation Stage and continue to progress to standards which are at and often above the expected levels for their age by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Standards in science are significantly high. The school is particularly good at identifying any weaknesses in pupils' achievement and quickly addressing them to keep them on track. As a result, all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English do very well. The parents recognise this; as one said, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds, loves school and I think that speaks for itself.'

The pupils' personal development is outstanding. The pupils are mature, reflective and concerned about others. They talk well about their feelings and emotions which help them, especially the most vulnerable pupils, grow in confidence. Pupils are very well behaved and have outstanding independent learning skills. They willingly take on responsibilities because they are well prepared to carry out their duties and prove to be very reliable citizens. Their knowledge of healthy living is exceptional, not least because of their involvement in caring for and managing the large school allotments which allow them to investigate and understand the properties of fresh vegetables and herbs.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations based on a thorough understanding of pupils' achievements and of the best teaching strategies to use to engage them fully. Teachers and teaching assistants plan closely together to meet the needs of every pupil in their class. Consequently, pupils learn at a rapid pace. The outstanding curriculum offers a wide range of learning opportunities both in the classroom and after school. Skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are particularly well developed. Close work with the community enriches pupils' lives in many ways. One parent commented that: 'Hexthorpe School is the hub of the community. My children love school life.'

The school provides exceptional levels of care, guidance and support for all pupils in its care. Steps to safeguard pupils' health and welfare are robust and rigorously monitored. The guidance pupils are given through individual targets and teachers' marking are consistently of high quality and, as a result, they have a very good understanding of how to improve their work. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is very good and the nurture unit makes an exceptional contribution to the welfare of those who are most vulnerable.

The key to the school's success is the inspirational leadership the headteacher and the excellent support senior leaders provide which is reflected in the commitment to high achievement for all. The school rigorously monitors everything it does and accurately matches its training needs to the areas in need of further development to keep the school moving forwards. All staff and governors are involved in planning for the future and are open and eager to embrace change. The school gives outstanding value for money and has an excellent capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

The inspection team found no significant weaknesses and the school's robust monitoring procedures ensure any concerns, no matter how minor, are quickly addressed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils start school with levels of attainment in most areas of learning which are below average and very low for communication, language and literacy. By the time pupils leave school they reach standards which are at least average for English and above average for mathematics and science. Close to half the pupils in the current Year 6 are working at levels which are above those expected for their age in all three subjects. Since the last inspection, standards have improved well and, despite a dip in 2004 following the influx of a significant number of new pupils into Year 6, they are back on track to making good year on year gains. By Year 2, standards are at least average. The school is extremely good at identifying concerns and taking swift action to address them. As a result, relative weaknesses in boys' writing skills, identified in 2006, show significant improvement throughout school this year. Improvements to the provision in the Foundation Stage now mean that pupils make very good progress overall. Excellent teaching, which is very focused on pupils' precise learning needs, means pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often make exceptional gains. The very effective deployment of English as an additional language teachers and bi-lingual classroom assistants means that pupils at an early stage of learning English also progress very well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils love coming to school and their behaviour is very good indeed. In the Foundation Stage, pupils quickly adapt to school routines and the pattern of very good behaviour is established right from the start. The nurture groups are very effective in supporting vulnerable pupils of all ages who find it difficult to conform by raising their self-esteem and confidence. The school has exceeded targets for attendance and pupils are very punctual. Pupils feel very safe and extremely well prepared for future life because of the high quality of teaching of important issues such as the dangers of drugs and alcohol, which have led to the school achieving national awards. Pupils relish the opportunity to take on responsibilities such as 'eco warriors'. In addition, the school allotment is an exemplar of 'green' gardening. Pupils' very good understanding of healthy living is greatly enhanced by this opportunity to eat and trade with their own 'home grown' produce. The social skills of many pupils are highly developed because of the many sustained opportunities to work with regular and highly committed visitors from the local community and frequent chances to join in local and national competitions. Through the school council, pupils learn to lead others and listen to their views. They make a real contribution to school development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding and is on a continual cycle of improvement so that inspectors judged it even stronger than the school graded itself. Enthusiastic staff work closely as a team. Teachers very regularly and rigorously assess pupils' progress in order to guide their teaching precisely and very effectively. Planning is very well matched to the needs of the pupils and to making the different subjects interesting and exciting. The outstanding teaching in the Foundation Stage gets the pupils off to a flying start. Teachers provide exciting experiences which give pupils an enjoyment in learning and excellent opportunities to develop their early basic learning skills. Teachers make meaningful links between subjects, such as when pupils learnt about Ancient Greeks through writing their own imaginative myths. Technology is used extremely well to motivate and inform pupils. Very skilful teaching assistants provide very good support for all pupils, including those who are learning to speak English and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a consequence, these pupils make the same excellent progress as their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum contributes strongly to the pupils' achievement. It is lively, varied and very well balanced. Although there is, rightly, a strong emphasis on the key skills of literacy and numeracy, teachers go to great lengths to enliven these subjects so that pupils want to learn. The two main strengths of the curriculum are the links between subjects that make learning cohesive and the emphasis that is placed on practical activities. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons because they do lots of interesting practical activities; as one pupil remarked, 'I do and I understand'. Those pupils who require extra support or those for whom English is a second language benefit enormously from specialist teaching in their first language that helps them access the entire curriculum. Similarly, the additional group work in reading and spelling helps to boost the skills of pupils who need extra help with literacy. There is an extensive and varied range of additional features that add further enrichment and breadth to the curriculum for all pupils. There are numerous after school clubs, catering for a wide range of interests as well as popular 'total immersion weeks' that concentrate on a particular subject or aspect for a whole week. The school is involved in many community projects and older pupils benefit greatly from the annual residential visit in taking responsibility for themselves.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Many parents show appreciation of the high standards of care. 'School is a very big family', said one. The headteacher, supported by highly trained governors and the site supervisor, ensure that there are meticulous procedures to ensure the health, safety, protection and welfare of the pupils. Pupils who are learning English, including those new to the country, are extremely well supported, as are their parents. The way data are analysed and pupils' progress is monitored, especially in reading, writing, numeracy and science is outstanding. Those not making the expected progress are quickly identified and given extra support. This process is central to pupils' high achievement. The high quality of marking and target-setting means that pupils

become closely involved in assessing and improving their own learning. 'I know how to do better', said one pupil with conviction.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Visionary and clearly focused leadership underpins the pupils' outstanding academic achievement and personal development. The assured and consistent high expectations of the headteacher are complemented by the drive and passion of the deputy headteacher and other senior staff and the hard work and creativity of everyone working in the school. The strong ethos is intensively focused on promoting every aspect of pupils' and staff's development so all achieve their potential. Systems to develop staff expertise, monitor and improve teaching and learning are rigorous, exciting and all encompassing. This is seen in the high proportion of advanced skills teachers and staff who take a leading role in developing education initiatives at a local and national level. Everyone is involved in consultations about school improvement which contribute to the high regard that parents and other community members have for the school. Senior staff provide challenge and support to each other in equal measure and create time for growth and reflection in order to improve performance. They make excellent use of national and local initiatives and are not afraid to discard those that do not work for the school. All key documents are presented to a very high standard which make them readily accessible to staff and parents. The outstanding governing body knows the strengths of the school exceedingly well and provides robust challenge and support to maintain an ever upward path of improvement.

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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for your kindness when we visited your school. We all really enjoyed being with you and seeing the many wonderful things that you do.

We would like to tell you about the findings from the inspection. You go to an outstanding school. We found that you all work extremely hard and enjoy yourself at school. You are very successful in all your subjects and are lively, very well behaved and enthusiastic pupils. You all get on together very well and learn to be tolerant and understanding of others. Your parents are very proud of the school and pleased that you do so well. The school takes very good care of you all.

The reasons for all this are very clear. You have a brilliant headteacher and excellent teachers and other staff. Everyone works very hard so you can succeed. They make lessons as interesting as they can and make certain that you learn your basic skills of reading, writing, number and using computers well. All the many visitors to your school help you in the classroom, on visits, in clubs and on the school allotment.

You can help the school in the future by continuing to work hard, listen to your teachers and have fun.