



Hesters Way Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131250
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 294646
Inspection dates 11–12 December 2006
Reporting inspector Helen Barter

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Dill Avenue
School category	Community		Cheltenham
Age range of pupils	4–11		GL51 0ES
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 525616
Number on roll (school)	177	Fax number	01242 525 678
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Geoff Buckeridge
		Headteacher	Graham Davidson
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2005		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4–11	11–12 December 2006	294646

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of social disadvantage. The number of pupils claiming free school meals and the proportion with learning difficulties are much higher than average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The school manages a Children's Centre which opened in March 2006. It caters for children from the age of two to four and provides a wide range of additional support for local families.

When the school was inspected in October 2005, it was judged to require a Notice to Improve in relation to the standards achieved in the school and the quality of teaching, especially the expectations of the most capable pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school has successfully tackled the issues raised at the last inspection and now provides pupils with a satisfactory education. Good improvement has been made in the quality of teaching, curriculum and care in the drive to raise pupils' achievement. There is a strong determination and good capacity amongst all staff to ensure that this continues to improve further.

Good leadership and management, very good strategic planning, and the commitment of staff and governors to embrace change and to do their best for pupils, have been key to a rise in standards in the past year and the good improvement in pupils' achievement. Thorough and purposeful self-evaluation means that the school knows exactly what needs to be done. Action taken to focus on improving pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy has been decisive and effective. The school recognises that it is now time for other staff to follow the excellent example already set in the leadership of English and mathematics, to raise the quality of leadership in other subject areas.

Teaching and learning are now satisfactory because much better use is made of assessments to ensure that pupils are given the right level of challenging work. With good local authority support, the school has developed rigorous procedures to track pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics and to identify where pupils are not achieving as well as they might. As a result, standards at the end of Year 6 rose significantly in English and science in 2006. Most pupils met their targets and reached broadly average standards. More able pupils achieved higher levels than previously because they were better challenged in their work. While standards in mathematics are slowly improving, they are still below average because pupils need more opportunities to practice their skills and learn to solve problems if they are to achieve as well as they do in English.

As a result of good provision, children make a good start to school in Reception and nearly all meet the levels expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. The curriculum satisfactorily balances subjects so that pupils do not miss out on important areas such as physical education and music. The school recognises that the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) must be its next priority if pupils' basic skills are to be fully developed.

The school's commitment to providing extended care is a strong feature of its work. It has highly effective partnerships with outside agencies through the Children's Centre. The high levels of personal support given to pupils and their families through the centre's activities raise their self-esteem and encourage greater parental involvement in their children's learning. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good and much improved. The attention given to their pastoral support is excellent and good work is being done to help pupils gain a clear understanding about how to improve their work. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Their increasing

enjoyment of school is evident in their happy, smiling faces, good behaviour, enthusiasm for learning and their view that Hesters Way Primary is 'really great.' Parents express confidence in all that the school does for their children. This is summed up by one who says 'My children are very happy at Hester's Way and they are achieving their targets.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by teaching them how to use and apply their skills more effectively.
- Improve the curriculum for information and communication technology.
- Develop the leadership and management skills of staff in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's attainment on entry to Reception is much lower than expected for their age, but they are happy and confident children because of their good experiences in the Children's Centre and their resulting smooth transition into school. Although some struggle with writing and mathematics, most make good progress and reach the goals expected of them.

From this starting point, pupils achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school. In 2006, standards and achievement improved significantly at the end of Year 6 and pupils reached broadly average standards in English and science. Although standards in mathematics were below average, they were still higher than those attained in 2005. In all three subjects, more able pupils are better challenged than previously and more are reaching the higher levels. Pupils' achievement in English has shown good improvement because of the challenging work now set for them. A well planned programme is starting to improve pupils' reading skills. Pupils' progress in mathematics is beginning to improve as more scope is given for them to practise their skills, but there is still some way to go. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve satisfactorily. Those with complex individual needs and behaviour difficulties are very well supported and make good progress against their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils behave well and enjoy school. They are keen participants in everything on offer and are happy in lessons and at playtime. Pupils' social and moral awareness is good because adults encourage them to work together and help them to understand the rules set for them. This is demonstrated well in Year 5 pupils' designs for a miracle playground where 'everyone is playing nicely and saying kind things.' Pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness is satisfactory, although their multi-cultural understanding is less well developed.

Pupils have a good knowledge about how to keep safe and care for themselves. Most enjoy healthy food and keep fit, as seen by the good uptake for physical activities. Pupils gain a good understanding of the importance of contributing in the community. For example, they enjoy helping others through charity work and are proud to be chosen to sing at a local home for the elderly. Pupils' sound literacy and science skills mean that they are reasonably well prepared to help ensure their future well-being. However, the school rightly identifies that there is more scope to develop pupils' relatively weaker skills in mathematics and ICT. Close working relationships between the school and external agencies ensure that attendance remains in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching in Reception is good. Activities are well planned between the two shared classrooms to meet the needs and abilities of the larger-than-usual group. There is a good emphasis on role play, such as being the 'quizmaster' and acting out the Christmas story, to develop children's speaking skills. Throughout the school, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are much improved. Assessment is used well to plan challenging work for pupils' different abilities and to match tasks accurately so that pupils work independently and do not rely on help. Teaching assistants provide good quality support for pupils of all abilities.

Following improvements that have been made, practical mathematics is taught well in some classes. However, there are some classes where this is not the case and, as a consequence, pupils do not always make enough progress in their learning in this area. Teachers show confident subject knowledge and use their knowledge of pupils' abilities well to ask them questions at different levels. However, teachers do not always give pupils enough chance to explain their ideas to show how well they have understood what they are learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision ensures pupils generally have a broad and balanced range of experiences to enable them to gain sound academic and personal skills. There is good enrichment through a wide range of extra-curricular activities during and after the school day. These add greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school and help to improve their social development. Good use of literacy across the curriculum, for example, in writing in history, has helped to improve pupils' standards in English, although opportunities to use mathematics skills in other subjects are less well developed. Curriculum planning does not always ensure that pupils build up their learning in a step-by-step fashion as they move through the school. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in different subjects through using ICT. Children in Reception

experience a good range of interesting practical activities to boost their learning. Good use is made of the outdoor area, with its new facilities, to extend children's learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care provided for pupils is outstanding and contributes significantly to pupils' improving achievement. The pastoral support team is very effective in its work to develop positive links with families. The support it gives to the significant number of vulnerable pupils, many of whom have complex social needs and learning difficulties, helps them to develop positive attitudes to learning and improves their personal development. The school adopts a vigilant approach to ensuring pupils' health and safety, and all procedures, including those for child protection, are fully in place. The breakfast club is a good example of the warm and caring approach towards individual pupils' needs.

Academic support and guidance is satisfactory. Pupils have clear targets for developing their work in literacy and numeracy. These are well displayed on classroom walls but are not always referred to as regularly as they might be. Pupils' 'first of the month' progress books provide an especially good means by which individuals can see how their writing is improving. Marking is satisfactory, although the better guidance provided to pupils in English means that they make better progress in this subject than they do in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good quality leadership and management has been the key to the school's improvement. There has been steely determination from the headteacher to tackle the most important priorities of improving English and mathematics head on. Robust self-evaluation, including precise and rigorous use of assessment, has led to the school having good quality actions plans and setting precise and challenging targets for school improvement. Staff training, including good support from the local authority and advisors, has had high priority and has led to all staff being clear about what needs to be done to raise standards and improve pupils' achievement. Regular and stringent monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders has ensured that teaching quality has improved across the school.

As leaders of English and mathematics, the headteacher and his deputy have set the standard for other staff to follow. Staff morale is good and there is a genuine commitment to improving practice and to building on the 'can do' attitude reported previously. The necessary focus on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy has meant that subject leaders have not yet had sufficient opportunity to develop their own leadership and management skills. A good quality action plan for ICT is an example of the capacity of staff to fulfil these responsibilities. The governing body has taken effective action to improve its knowledge of how well the school is doing by gaining better understanding of the data about pupils' progress. It now provides good

governance as it uses this information to provide more challenge through questioning the school about its plans and to support it in its drive towards improvement.

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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

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	3
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	3
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 for making the inspectors welcome and talking to us when we visited Hesters Way recently. We found your school has worked hard to make sure you now receive a satisfactory education. These are some of the good things:

- Nearly all of you reach the standards which are expected of you. It's really good that the school has helped you to do much better in literacy than you used to do.
- You are friendly and well behaved. We are pleased that you have more clubs and sports activities. You obviously really enjoy them because so many of you attend.
- Your teachers check how well you are doing and now make sure that you have work which is at just the right level for you and makes you think hard.
- The school makes sure that you have the right amount of time to learn about everything. You do much more PE and music than you used to. It was lovely to hear the infants singing their Christmas songs so well.
- You go to a very caring school. Everyone has your best interests at heart and wants you to be safe and happy and to do as well as you can.
- The staff and governors know just what is working well in your school and have very good plans to improve things even more, such as helping you to be better readers.

These are the things which now need to be improved.

- So that you do even better in mathematics, we have asked the teachers to give you more opportunities to practise using your maths in many different ways.
- We would like the school to make sure that you learn everything you need to in ICT and that you use computers to help you learn in every subject.
- The headteacher and all the other teachers have been working very hard to help you improve your English and maths. Now it's time for them to look at how well you are doing in all the other subjects. You can help by working as hard as you can in everything you do.

I wish you all the very best for the future.