

# Highters Heath Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103365
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	308292
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alison Grainger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Eve Pitts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Connor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	Highters Heath Lane Kings Heath Birmingham B14 4LY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01214 642459
<b>Fax number</b>	01214 648009

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Most pupils are White British and about a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. About a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above the national average. When children enter the Reception Year, their attainment is below the level expected, with a particular weakness in communication, language and literacy skills.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is successful in developing pupils as well rounded young people who get on well with each other and with the adults in school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Almost all pupils behave consistently well, making the school a calm and safe place. Pupils feel safe at school and say that the adults are approachable and look after them well. Parents value the school's positive and friendly atmosphere. They are pleased that the school works closely with them, particularly if their children are experiencing difficulties. As one said, 'I have a good relationship with my child's teachers and the head of the school'.

Pupils know a lot about how to keep fit and healthy. They are keen to eat healthily and enthusiastically participate in sporting activities at lunchtimes and after school. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community, taking on responsibilities and raising funds for charities. Pupils have a good understanding of the needs of others, welcoming new entrants to the school.

Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory but standards remain below average at the end of Year 6, with writing being particularly weak. Progress is satisfactory as pupils move up through the school but this is not enough to raise standards, and the gains made in writing are only just acceptable. Because pupils' progress is only satisfactory, their preparation for the next stage of education and their future lives is only adequate, even though their personal qualities develop well.

Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory and are the main factors influencing pupils' progress. There are some good features. Lessons are usually well organised, with effective use of teaching assistants particularly to support groups needing extra help. Instructions and explanations are clear. Teaching does not promote good progress, because it is not always closely enough matched to the needs of all the pupils in the class. The curriculum is very well enriched by visits, visitors and clubs and pupils really appreciate this. Pupils have identified, and inspectors agree, that they need more opportunities for writing at length if they are to improve their skills in this area. Some pupils are frustrated that they do not have enough time to develop quality pieces of writing in English or in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Real strengths are evident in the attention to pupils' personal welfare but academic guidance makes only a satisfactory contribution to their learning. The school works well with outside agencies, especially to support its more vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, monitoring and evaluation of provision, particularly teaching, are not sharply enough focused on analysing how effectively the school promotes pupils' progress. This means that the changes necessary to drive standards up are not made swiftly enough and provision is being maintained at only a satisfactory level. Nevertheless, the headteacher, staff and governors are committed to improvement, as is demonstrated in developments to support pupils' well-being. They have adequate capacity to take the school forward.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children settle quickly in the Reception Year because of the good care and support they are given. It is here that the positive relationships between adults and children begin. Children

move on well in their personal, social and emotional development, laying secure foundations for their strong personal development in later years and building confidence for their move to Year 1. Teaching and the curriculum support children in making a satisfactory start in other areas of their learning although their skills and understanding remain below the level expected. A sound balance is achieved between activities that are led by adults and those that children choose for themselves from a range provided. Adults sometimes miss opportunities, to extend children's speaking and listening skills, which is one of the areas in which attainment is weakest on entry.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Accelerate pupils' progress in all subjects, and particularly in writing, so that standards are raised.
- Ensure that teaching always takes full account of the needs of all the pupils in the class.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to write at length in English and in other subjects.
- Carefully analyse the influence of provision, particularly teaching, on the outcomes in pupils' attainment and progress, and take swift action for improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their starting points on entry. Some improvement was evident in pupils' performance in the national tests in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 in 2007. Results were also better than in previous years in the end of Year 2 assessments in 2007. Nevertheless, the big picture is that standards remain below average across the school. Writing is still the weakest area in all years, and particularly in Year 6.

Pupils' satisfactory rate of progress is not enough to get their standards up and there is no year group in which progress is good. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, progress at a similar rate. The few pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make satisfactory gains in understanding and speaking English.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a strong sense of respect for other cultures, religions and customs. The school is racially harmonious. Pupils care about the environment and want to help, for example, by recycling. They are proud of the school allotment that, they say, 'can raise real strawberries'. Pupils' strong contribution to school affairs extends beyond the school council. They value opportunities for initiative and responsibility, for example for older pupils to look after younger ones and to organise sponsored events to raise funds for charities.

There is much that pupils enjoy about school, particularly the extensive range of activities additional to lessons, such as clubs and the residential visit on which they are able to use quad bikes and abseil. They like being with their friends in school. Enjoyment of lessons is only satisfactory overall. Many find writing boring and say that they do not have enough time to

get work finished and to do their best. Pupils are keen to learn and some even choose to practise writing at home.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

There are good features to teaching, particularly in the organisation of lessons. Teachers explain to pupils clearly what the purpose of each lesson is so that pupils know what they are aiming to achieve. Often, there is an opportunity for pupils to check how well they have done at the end of the lesson, reinforcing their new knowledge and understanding. In many lessons, pupils are given opportunities to discuss in pairs, developing their speaking and listening skills as well as sharing ideas.

Teaching is not good enough to increase pupils' rate of progress and raise standards because it is not always closely enough matched to the full range of needs in the class. Sometimes the input for the class is at the same level for all. Although there may be additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at such times, there is often not enough challenge for the more capable pupils. Even when activities are varied for different groups, they are not always pitched at a level that is right for all. Expectations of the standard of pupils' presentation of their work are not high enough.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

Many activities contribute well to pupils' personal development and well-being. An extensive range of sporting activities helps them to keep fit. The programme of personal, social and health education helps pupils to make sensible choices about their lifestyles, builds their safety awareness and develops self-esteem. Initiatives such as the creation of an outdoor classroom increase pupils' enjoyment, for example, in Year 2.

The curriculum promotes satisfactory progress in the areas of learning in the Reception Year and in the subjects of the National Curriculum in Years 1 to 6. The school is rightly seeking to raise standards in mathematics and science through giving pupils more opportunities to use and develop their understanding through practical activities. A focus on improving speaking and listening skills is proving beneficial. Pupils' progress in writing, however, is hampered by too few opportunities to write at length in English and in other subjects. Not enough attention is given to spelling and handwriting.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pastoral care is a significant strength, giving pupils confidence that they have an adult to whom they can turn if they have any worries and making them feel safe. Arrangements for supporting children when they start in Reception are good and they settle in happily as a result. Guidance and support for vulnerable pupils is very effective in developing their self-esteem and also their confidence in communicating with adults and other pupils. Child protection procedures are well established and the necessary checks are made on adults who come into school.

Pupils understand the system of individual targets. They see their targets helping them to progress in mathematics, but as giving them less help in writing. The effectiveness of the writing

targets is limited by pupils not having enough opportunities to work on their areas for improvement through long pieces of writing. Most marking is basic. There are examples of good practice but marking does not always tell pupils what they are doing well and what they need to work on next.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

At the last inspection, leadership and management had promoted rapid improvement to get the school to a stage where it was providing pupils with an adequate education. Since then, the satisfactory quality of education has been maintained and there have been some important developments in the promotion of pupils' personal development and well-being.

There remains a strong commitment to improvement, and staff are supportive of each other. However, the school has to some extent, taken its eye off the ball with regard to raising standards and has seen itself as more successful than it is in promoting pupils' progress. The main reason why teaching continues to be satisfactory, rather than good, is that its influence on pupils' attainment and progress is not carefully enough analysed. As a result, the areas in which changes need to be made, for example in more closely matching teaching to pupils' needs, are not identified swiftly or precisely enough. Governors continue to be very supportive of the school and very committed to it. They are gaining confidence in asking challenging questions of leaders to help move the school on.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	3
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

28 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highters Heath Primary School, Birmingham B14 4LY

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and watching your lessons. You are welcoming and friendly. Almost all of you behave well in lessons and around the school. You are keen to learn and some of you told us that you practise your writing at home, often writing very long pieces.

You enjoy the many extra activities, such as clubs and visits. These activities contribute a lot to your personal development and help you to keep fit. You have a good knowledge of how to eat healthily and you told us about the sensible choices that you make about snacks.

The adults in school look after you well. You told us that they are approachable and that you can go to them if you have any worries. You also said that they do not put up with bullying and that this helps you to feel safe in school. You know a good deal, too, about how to stay safe when you are out of school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education. As a result, you are making satisfactory progress with your work. We have asked the adults to make some improvements so that you get more out of being at school. We have said that they should:

- Help you to make more progress, particularly in writing.
- Make sure that teaching is always at the right level for each of you in the class, so that activities are not too easy or too difficult.
- Provide you with more opportunities to do long pieces of writing.
- Look very carefully at how well they help you to learn so that they can make changes to what they do quickly when necessary.

You can help by making sure that you always do your best and that everyone behaves well. Thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Alison Grainger Lead inspector



28 February 2008

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Alison Grainger  
Lead inspector