

Hursthead Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106052
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309013
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Rick Benton
Headteacher	Mrs J Driscoll
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Kirkstead Road Cheadle Hulme Cheadle Cheshire SK8 7PZ
Telephone number	0161 4392238
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was conducted by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This average sized school draws pupils from a wide area. Socio-economic circumstances are favourable, reflected in the low proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The school is on the same site as Hursthead Junior School. The headteacher is working on a part-time basis after recently returning from leave. The deputy headteacher is continuing as acting headteacher until the end of the summer term 2008. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This outstanding school successfully achieves its aim of providing a happy, safe, stimulating and purposeful environment. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and acting headteacher has created a thriving community where every pupil really matters so all pupils make excellent progress. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Many comment on the warm, family atmosphere and say that staff are very approachable, friendly and professional. The school welcomes and reaches out to parents as partners in education through open evenings, social events and informal meetings and discussions. Family learning courses, for example in first aid, are arranged readily in response to parents' requests.

Throughout the school, achievement is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high due to the excellent quality of teaching. An excellent curriculum is enriched most effectively through visits, visitors and clubs. The natural areas of grounds have yet to be fully used as a learning resource. Pupils and parents spoke highly of the very broad and popular range of additional activities on offer.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent. The very high priority placed on developing pupils' confidence and self-belief ensures that they become successful learners and caring, responsible individuals. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in happy pupils who are kind, considerate members of the school and wider communities. Pupils know they must care for their health. They feel safe in school because they know staff will always listen to and help them. Smiling faces indicate very happy pupils, which in turn makes their parents happy. Pupils are caring towards others and act responsibly as school councillors and playground friends. Exceptionally high academic standards together with outstanding personal and social skills are excellent preparation for the next steps in pupils' education and future lives.

Staff know their pupils very well and the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. This is another aspect that parents hold in high regard, many commenting on how well the school meets their children's learning and personal needs. Exemplary provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they progress as well as their peers. Excellent assessment systems provide very good information from which staff plan challenging and stimulating learning activities closely matched to individual needs.

The key to this successful and flourishing community is the outstanding quality of leadership and management. Leaders, staff and governors share a strong vision and commitment to provide the best education for every pupil; this inspires every aspect of the school's work resulting in consistently strong performance over time. Very effective teamwork and the willingness of staff, governors and parents to move forward and embrace new ideas to benefit pupils give the school an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

When children start school, their skills are often well above the expectations typical for their age. Very good relationships with parents and sensitive induction procedures ensure that children feel happy, safe, secure and eager to learn. Every child makes excellent progress in their learning, personal and social skills due to teaching and care of the highest quality. Outstanding leadership and thoughtfully planned learning experiences based on an excellent

curriculum provide a rich range of activities. These capture children's natural curiosity and challenge them to explore and discover things for themselves. They really enjoyed hunting for mini-beasts in the outdoor investigation area and carefully recorded how the snails were growing. A sharp focus on ensuring that children quickly acquire very good knowledge and understanding of sounds and letters leads to impressive progress in reading and writing. Innovative methods of teaching of writing have been used by the local authority as exemplars of good practice. At the end of Reception, a significant number of children exceed the goals expected for their age particularly in reading, speaking and writing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use the outdoor areas as a learning resource.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards that are exceptionally high in reading and writing and significantly above average in mathematics. Pupils' performance has been consistently strong for the last five years and evidence indicates that pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to sustain this. Pupils build on their very good knowledge of letters and sounds gained in the Foundation Stage. In 2007, twice as many pupils gained the highest levels in reading and writing than in schools nationally. High quality teaching and very good use of assessment information enable staff to plan work that challenges every pupil's individual needs. Consequently, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is clearly seen in the calm atmosphere and in the respect pupils show others and their environment. One pupil referred to school as 'our family of friends'. Many parents commented that the school really helps their children develop confidence and self-esteem. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, and attendance is consistently much higher than the national average. Behaviour is exemplary, both in class and around the school. Pupils certainly know how to stay healthy, recalling key facts such as 'Fruit, vegetables and exercise are good,' and 'Too many sweets can damage our teeth.' Many choose to take part in before- and after-school clubs that promote exercise, such as cheerleading. Pupils are keen to contribute to the school community as members of the school council or as one of the highly regarded 'playground friends' who are successful in their aim for playtime to be a very enjoyable time for everyone. Pupils help the wider community by fundraising for different charities. The excellent cooperation between pupils helps them achieve extremely high standards in their basic skills and prepares them outstandingly well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships in the classrooms create a very positive climate which contributes to the outstanding learning that takes place. Very well planned investigational activities make learning fun. Good quality questioning, carefully matched to individual needs and really

challenging pupils to think hard, is a major factor in pupils' outstanding progress. Excellent support from teaching assistants is another key element. Exceptional, in-depth knowledge of their pupils enables teachers to provide feedback that celebrates what pupils have done well and guides them clearly to their next steps in learning. Pupils pay great attention in lessons so they capture all that is being said and no time is wasted. Extremely good use is made of new technology; learning was really made meaningful for one class when they studied the 1960s using their own family photographs, scanned onto the interactive whiteboard via the computer.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very rich and balanced. Literacy, numeracy, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) have priority but other subjects are not forgotten. Pupils really enjoy the arts, sports and gymnastics and consequently reach high standards; observational drawings and paintings show very close attention to detail. The school is exploring how to make best use of the different environments recently created in the outdoor areas in order to provide for pupils' learning and enjoyment. Suitable adaptations to the curriculum ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have full access and they are fully included. A very effective programme for personal and social education helps pupils reflect on feelings and emotions. They grow into extremely well behaved, caring individuals who really consider the needs of others. Very strong enrichment activities extend learning way beyond the classroom and broaden pupils' cultural development. For example, they learn French and dress as Victorian school children at Macclesfield Heritage Centre. Pupils enthusiastically attend school clubs such as recorders.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

In this very caring school, each child is treated as an individual. Excellent pastoral care contributes considerably to pupils' learning. Parents spoke warmly of the high quality care their children receive. Pupils say they feel safe and they trust all the staff. Safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements and pupils are closely supervised at all times. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent care and provision. Their specific needs are particularly well catered for through exemplary individual education plans, contributing significantly to their excellent progress. All outside agencies are used fully, so pupils receive expert help to overcome any particular difficulties. Excellent academic guidance helps to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress. Pupils know their targets and very thorough feedback shows them exactly how to improve their work. The very effective system for tracking pupils' progress is enhanced by the excellent knowledge staff have of each pupil in their care.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding, well organised leadership and management at all levels ensure that there is no complacency in this school. Although no issues were raised at the previous inspection, the school has made excellent progress, maintaining the exceptionally high standards. ICT provision has been improved, French added to the curriculum, and the playground extended. Senior managers and subject leaders use their skills and knowledge most effectively to prioritise areas for development, following a highly accurate analysis of the school's performance. Governance

is excellent. Governors are extremely well informed, supportive and challenging. Every member of the leadership team contributes to improvement planning which is closely related to targets for pupils' achievements. Very careful budget management directly links improvement plans, for example building and grounds improvements. Value for money is excellent.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

The inspectors would like to thank you all very much for helping us when we visited your school. We met many friendly, smiling children so we had a very happy time and managed to complete all our work. We thought you would like to know what we found.

You go to an outstanding school. Your headteacher, acting headteacher, the governors and all the staff make sure you are extremely well cared for. You told us that you really like school and this makes your mums and dads happy. We are glad you feel safe in school.

You get off to a very good start in the Reception classes. All the way through school, we saw you working really hard. Did you know that you do much better than most children of your age? Well done everyone! You are very good readers and we were really impressed by your writing. Perhaps some of you will become authors one day or maybe artists because we also saw some lovely pictures, models and art work.

You have excellent teachers. They always make sure you have lots and lots of fun and interesting things to do, and you said you like all the clubs, visits to different places and learning to speak French.

You certainly know how to be healthy. We were pleased to see you running about, exercising, being cheerleaders and enjoying healthy food. We know you enjoy the Trim Trail and the 'Tele Tubby' area. We have asked your teachers to use the outdoor areas more often so you can learn outside.

We hope you will continue to enjoy everything you do at school, and we send you our very best wishes.