

Hurst Knoll St James' Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106229
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309062
Inspection dates	16–17 January 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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Tracy Bennett
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Nelson
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Ladbrooke Road Ashton-under-Lyne Lancashire OL6 8JS
Telephone number	0161 3304049
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hurst Knoll is an average sized school. The area is affected by social and economic deprivation and a higher than usual number of pupils enter or leave the school part way through their education. An above average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English in addition to their home language is similar to the national average and an increasing number come from Eastern Europe. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Standards on entry to the Nursery are well below those typical of children this age. The school has experienced an unusually high level of staffing turbulence in recent years.

The school holds the National Healthy Schools Award.

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. The inspection confirmed the school's evaluation of how effective it is. Value for money is satisfactory. In recent years, a difficult period of staffing disruption has adversely affected standards and progress. This is reflected in the most recent end of Key Stage 2 results, which were well below average. Acting rigorously to remedy the situation, the headteacher has worked closely with senior leaders, staff, and the local authority to implement robust strategies for improvement and these are beginning to make an impact. Achievement is satisfactory overall and for most pupils standards are broadly average. Nevertheless, there is room for further improvement, particularly in English.

Personal development is good. Pupils are happy in school and enjoy their lessons. They understand how to be fit and healthy and are understandably proud of their National Healthy Schools award. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. Good, trusting relationships with staff support learning and pupils are confident their concerns will be listened to. Behaviour is good and pupils say this has improved in recent times. Some parents expressed concerns about poor behaviour by some pupils; poor behaviour was not evident during the inspection. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils value rewards given for good behaviour and effort, and they say, 'Golden Time and reward assemblies help you to work hard and to keep it up.' They are keen to accept responsibilities, for example as school councillors, and to contribute to the global community through active links with a school in Africa. These experiences, together with satisfactory academic and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, are suitable preparation for pupils' future economic well-being. However, a significant minority of families find it difficult to ensure that their children attend school regularly so attendance is below average.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, resulting in satisfactory progress. Examples of good practice were seen during the inspection where staff built on good relationships with pupils and made learning active and interesting, particularly with ICT, so that pupils progressed well. The satisfactory curriculum promotes pupils' basic skills satisfactorily and their personal skills well. Enrichment activities are good; Year 6 pupils worked with musicians in school then visited the BBC studios in Manchester to hear them perform.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Good pastoral care ensures that pupils feel safe and well cared for. They say things such as, 'This school is cosy, there are no bad groups here.' Pupils have some opportunities to be 'critical' friends by assessing and marking their own and each others' work. Most parents are pleased with the care provided by the school, but a significant minority feel their views are not sought and the school does not take enough account of their suggestions or concerns.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, deputy and governors are well aware of the urgent need for further improvement and have worked closely to implement a clear vision for improvement, firmly focused on raising academic standards to match pupils' good personal skills.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Children get a good start in the Nursery where the importance given to early basic

skills is evident in all learning activities that address the Foundation Stage curriculum well. Teaching is good in the Nursery and children are very well cared for. They feel secure, quickly settle into the class routines, enjoy coming to school and make good progress in all the areas of learning. In the Reception class, progress slows, although it is satisfactory, because the teaching is less effective in meeting the needs of the children. The school recognises this inconsistency and is taking action to improve it. Standards are below national expectations by the time children enter Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in English.
- Work with families to improve attendance.
- Improve links with parents so that all feel their views are taken into account.

A small proportion of schools whose performance 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 achieve satisfactorily overall. They make mostly satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments of Year 2 pupils in 2007 showed average standards being attained in writing and mathematics, representing some good progress. However, in reading, standards were well below average. Year 6 test results in 2007 were well below average in English and science, but broadly average in mathematics; pupils did not meet statutory targets. The progress of this year group was badly affected by staffing disruption during their time in school. In addition, a significant number joined the school later than at the usual time. Tracking information shows that pupils who started in Reception made satisfactory progress, but few made enough progress to reach the higher levels. Pupils' work and school data shows that actions to raise standards are beginning to take effect. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and or/disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English enable them to make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show good understanding of how to care for their health; they enjoy fruit snacks, choose fruit and vegetables from the popular lunchtime salad bar and drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and improve their concentration. They benefit from good quality physical education provided by specialist teachers and coaches. Pupils say they feel safe and comfortable to talk to staff, and particularly appreciate the learning mentor's weekly 'Drop-in' sessions. Behaviour is good; this was apparent when pupils acted quietly and responsibly during several wet playtimes. Most pupils enjoy lessons and playing with their friends. They show concern for others, often through charity fund-raising. Older pupils readily accept the responsibility of being a 'Playtime Pal' to help younger pupils enjoy their playtimes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Time to reflect encourages pupils to appreciate their own and others' work and they believe their efforts are valued. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong. Strong, trusting relationships between adults and pupils have a positive impact on their well-being and learning. Close links with schools in Africa and America give pupils a good understanding of other religions and ways of life. Despite the school's best efforts, poor

attendance from a significant minority of families is keeping overall attendance figures below the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons are planned well and make good use of all available resources. Teachers provide lots of prompts and reinforcement so pupils can work more independently and have some responsibility for their own learning. Good teaching was seen in lessons in the Nursery and in Years 5 and 6 and, consequently, pupils made good progress. Sometimes, however, the pace of learning is not as brisk as it should be. Teachers talk for too long so pupils lose interest, their concentration wanes and progress slows. Pupils respond particularly well when teachers use ICT; for example, by using the interactive whiteboard in a Year 6 writing lesson the teachers skilfully turned checking punctuation into a fun activity. Support staff are suitably deployed to help different groups of learners. Good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that behaviour is managed well so pupils concentrate and learning is not interrupted.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school makes satisfactory provision for the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT and pupils enjoy the 'hands-on' approach in science. The recent push on developing numeracy skills has helped to raise standards, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Greater emphasis on teaching phonics and developing reading and writing strategies is helping to raise standards in literacy, but it is too early to see the full impact of this. Better resources for ICT and increased teacher confidence have strengthened links between subjects. Good provision for personal, social and health education helps pupils to adopt safe, healthy lifestyles and to understand their rights and responsibilities in the community. The curriculum is enriched well. Specialist Spanish teaching, sports coaching and themed weeks, such as for art or Spanish, are all popular. Older pupils welcome the challenges afforded by residential visits and speak with pride of their success in abseiling. A good range of after-school clubs attracts many pupils and helps them to develop aesthetic and sporting skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good pastoral guidance and support make pupils feel safe and secure. They expressed high levels of trust in the adults who care for them; 'I'm surrounded by people that care for me and help me' was one typical comment. The learning mentor and teaching assistants successfully ensure that pupils with emotional and behavioural problems do not disrupt teaching and learning. Child protection procedures, risks assessments and health and safety arrangements are in place. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements.

Satisfactory systems track and monitor pupils' progress and show staff where to direct extra help. Class and individual literacy and numeracy targets are in place and older pupils said, 'You know what to aim for.' Good marking in Years 5 and 6 shows pupils what they do well and how to improve. However, this quality of marking is not consistent throughout the school so other pupils are not shown how to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have effective individual education plans and are supported well by skilled teaching

assistants so they progress in line with their classmates. Effective links with outside agencies provide specialist support when needed. Pupils from Poland receive good bilingual support and make good progress learning English.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Sensitive leadership by the headteacher ensured that the school continued to run smoothly and morale remained high through a long period of difficulties and staffing disruptions. School self-evaluation is accurate. The local authority has provided valuable support in the drive to raise attainment and, consequently, standards in mathematics have risen. However, there is much room for improvement in English. Subject leaders are playing a more active role in the drive for school improvement and staff performance management targets are linked to the issues for improvement. Progress towards these targets and the quality of teaching and learning is monitored regularly and areas for development given suitable support. Governance is satisfactory. Through their active links with subjects and aspects, governors are becoming more knowledgeable and able to hold the school to account. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The recently introduced strategies are making an impact and there is satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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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?	3
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 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?	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	2
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

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?	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

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

You will remember that two inspectors visited your school recently. We would like to thank you for making us welcome, giving us lots of help and telling us many things about your school. We were impressed that you all behaved really sensibly even though very wet weather meant you had to stay indoors nearly all the time! We thought you would like to know our judgements about your school.

Your school is satisfactory. You get a good start in the Nursery and your teachers help you reach standards similar to most schools. We know you have been working hard to improve your mathematics and your reading, but we think you could reach higher standards in English. The school is going to help you do this. You have made a start with writing; when we saw Year 6 hard at work we heard comments like, 'I love writing!'

You behave well in lessons and most of you enjoy your work. The school makes sure you are all safe and you are kind to others. Several older ones told us how they help the younger ones at playtime. You told us you enjoy the extra activities and clubs that make school more interesting.

We were sorry to learn that some of you do not attend school regularly; it would really help your schoolwork if you make sure you come every day. Many of your parents said they were happy with the school, but a few have some concerns about behaviour and your progress. The school wants to make sure your parents are all happy with the way their views are sought about things that are happening in school.