

Highfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106329
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	309099
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Winstanley
Headteacher	Mr C Parfitt
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Bridgenorth Avenue Bradfield Road Urmston Manchester M41 9PA
Telephone number	0161 748 6096
Fax number	0161 746 7593

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	14–15 July 2008
Inspection number	309099

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves an area of Greater Manchester that is broadly average in social and economic terms. Boys outnumber girls by three to two. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school holds the 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: 2

This is a good school. It has an outstanding feature in the community spirit engendered within, and lived by, the pupils. This is celebrated by many parents. The school has successfully overcome some staffing and budgetary issues in recent years. It is stable and improving rapidly. The school gives good value for money.

Pupils' skills on joining the school are below those normally expected. Because progress is good overall, particularly in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, standards are rising faster than the average national rate. The standards of pupils leaving the school in Year 6 in 2007 were broadly average. Standards have improved well in 2008. Many more pupils have reached the higher levels in English although this is not quite the case in mathematics and science. The school is working hard to address this imbalance.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good because the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Attendance is consistently above average because pupils enjoy coming to an attractive and welcoming place to learn. This is an inclusive school, a view supported by parents with comments such as, 'The school has a very friendly and warm atmosphere,' and by pupils who say, 'Everyone is different to look at, but they are all the same inside'. This is why pupils feel safe, secure and happy.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships between pupils and adults are consistently good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and trust them to carry out tasks responsibly. Pupils recognise the efforts teachers are making to help them and rise to the challenges they are set. In most lessons, but particularly in English, teachers provide a range of learning activities which help pupils to learn well. In some other lessons, particularly in mathematics and science, the highest attaining pupils are not challenged enough with work matched to their needs.

The curriculum is good. The school teaches all pupils two foreign languages in addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum. The development of literacy is a strong feature and ties together learning in many other subjects. Similar work is not as advanced in mathematics and science. A good range of sporting, artistic and creative experiences enriches pupils' all-round learning and understanding about the world in which they live.

Staff know the pupils very well and take good care of them. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Because teachers measure accurately and record regularly what pupils know and can do, those pupils who need support receive it promptly.

Leadership and management are good. Under the purposeful leadership of the headteacher, standards have risen rapidly as recent initiatives to improve the core skills of literacy and numeracy have taken root successfully throughout the school. This demonstrates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement. There is a strong team spirit in the school and all staff share common values of respect and aspiration for pupils. Though the work of the school is monitored consistently and regularly, its evaluation of learning lacks robustness, as shown, for example, in the insufficiently high level of challenge for higher-attaining pupils in mathematics and science.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. They settle quickly and happily into school routines. They make good progress in all areas of learning because teaching is good. Most children start in the Nursery with skills that are below typical expectations, particularly in their language and communication skills. However, the good emphasis on developing spoken language through a focused approach to spelling and reading skills is having a positive impact. As they enter Year 1, the majority of children are working at the levels typically expected for their age. Relationships are good and children are well cared for in a safe, secure learning environment. Their progress is assessed regularly and well planned practical activities and first-hand experiences engage their interest and develop skills well. The attractive, stimulating outdoor areas offer good opportunities for them to explore the natural environment, cultivate their own allotment and develop their creative and physical skills. Leadership and management are good and staff work well together as a team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work is challenging and matched more closely to the needs of the more able pupils in mathematics and science.
- Evaluate the learning that goes on in classrooms with more rigour to ensure that all pupils are making the best progress they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards overall are above average. At the end of Year 2 in 2007, standards were below average in writing, reading and mathematics. Provisional teacher assessments for the end of Year 2 in 2008 show standards to be higher in all areas than in 2007 and broadly average overall. This shows good progress for these pupils. At the end of Year 6 in 2007, standards were broadly average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. Standards in 2008 have risen well, particularly in English and mathematics, although more able pupils are not achieving as well as they might in mathematics and science. The school's reliable tracking system shows that this is common throughout the school in these subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress at the same rate as their peers due to the good quality support provided.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They are polite, get on well together and behave very well when moving around the school and at breaks and lunchtime. They say confidently there is always someone to turn to for help and are fully aware of what to do if they are concerned about bullying, which they state emphatically is rare. They have a good understanding of cultures and traditions other than their own and they respect people's differences. Their understanding of healthy lifestyles is good: they make informed choices from the healthy food available at lunchtime and from the fruit tuck-shop at break times. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school community through the school council, as play leaders and buddies and by taking responsibility to keep the school clean and tidy. In addition, the 'Eights' system fosters good relationships amongst pupils and contributes significantly to the strong family atmosphere in the school.

Above average skills in literacy and numeracy ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is better in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2 than in other parts of the school. In the best lessons, pupils are set interesting tasks which build on previous learning and are well matched to their different needs. They are routinely required to work independently in groups, discussing problems and developing solutions for themselves. Teachers ask searching questions which encourage pupils to explain the reasons for their answers. Most pupils find the work stimulating and their interest is sustained through the lesson. They make good progress. In a minority of other lessons, mainly numeracy and science, all pupils in the class begin a task from the same start point. Here, higher-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently and many find the work too easy. Some of these pupils begin to lose their focus and, on occasions, become restless. The quality of behaviour slips, the lesson is disturbed and learning slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum exceeds basic requirements and its range stimulates pupils' interest. French and Spanish are taught throughout the school, including the Foundation Stage. Good emphasis is placed on developing the performing arts and pupils enjoy participating in musical events at local venues, in the school Eisteddfod and at end of term concerts. Pupils use their writing and information and communication technology skills well to support their learning in other subjects. Relevant links are being made between more subjects to make learning more meaningful for all pupils. The extensive programme to support pupils' personal development ensures they have a good understanding of how to stay safe, fit and healthy. A good range of well supported after-school clubs, and many visits and visitors to the school, effectively extend pupils' learning experiences and broaden their horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes its responsibilities for safeguarding pupils very seriously and meets government requirements. The school takes good care of all pupils. Staff know the children well and are able to give help promptly if required. Pupils trust adults and do not hesitate to seek assistance. Links with professional and other agencies are good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by all staff and, as a result, these pupils are included in all activities and make good progress. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and tracked by the school's reliable assessment system. Teachers do not always make the best possible use of this information to ensure that higher-attaining pupils are challenged at the boundaries of what they know and can do.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has shown good leadership during a period in which falling rolls, significant staff turnover and the management of a deficit budget have had an adverse impact on standards at the end of Year 6. With good support from senior and other members of staff, successful management actions have led to a significant rise in standards in English. Standards in mathematics and science have also risen, though not to the same extent for the more able pupils, because the monitoring of learning in these areas has not been carried through with sufficient rigour. The school sets itself challenging targets, based upon realistic assessments of what pupils know and can do, which it mostly meets. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and honest and involves staff and governors. It gives an accurate view of its strengths and where developments are required. Governance is good. The well informed and experienced governing body has a realistic view of the school. Governors give generous support and are in a good position to pinpoint the challenges required for the future. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The school has improved the reliability of its assessment system and has successfully raised standards in English, mathematics and science. It has good capacity to make further improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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

Inspection of Highfield Primary School, Urmston, M41 9PA

Thank you for being so polite and helpful to us when we inspected your school recently. Both of my colleagues, Mrs Davenport and Mrs Shields, commented on how well you behaved at lunchtime, playtime and as you moved around the school. We were really impressed. We also want to thank you for helping us to gain an accurate picture of Highfield, by telling us very strongly and clearly how you feel about being there.

We found that Highfield is a good school, but the spirit of community within the school is outstanding. The way you all look out for each other and work and play sensibly and harmoniously together, is excellent and a delight.

Some of the good things about the school are:

- the dedication of your headteacher and all the other adults in the school, who work so hard to keep you safe and happy
- the broad and interesting curriculum and enthusiastic teaching which, together, help you reach standards that are above average in English and mathematics when you leave Year 6
- the Foundation Stage, which helps all of you to get off to such a good start with your learning.

There are two things we have suggested to the school in order to improve:

- make sure that the work you are set in lessons stretches all of you as much as possible, particularly in mathematics and science
- check much more closely that all of you are making the best progress you possibly can in lessons.

You can help your school to get even better by continuing to attend regularly and by carrying on being the respectful, tolerant and hard working young people you already are. May I wish you all good luck for the future.