

# Mexborough Highwoods Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106748
<b>Local Authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	309220
<b>Inspection date</b>	8 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joe Peacock

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	171
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Burke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Diane Dunn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Highwoods Road Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 9ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01709 583273
<b>Fax number</b>	01709 584757

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the school's strategies to raise standards, especially for the more able pupils; assessment procedures and the use of the information gained; key leaders' and governors' evaluation of the school; and pupils' personal development. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher and senior managers, governors and pupils; visits to classrooms; analysis of pupils' work, assessment data and documents; and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average sized school is in the heart of a former mining area and serves a large estate with mainly social housing. Most pupils are of White British heritage with less than 5% coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion entitled to free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are both above average. There is a significant number of pupils who join or leave the school during term time. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People.

## 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 with many outstanding features. The energy and expertise of the headteacher have contributed significantly to the school's very good improvement since its previous inspection. Parents' confidence has been won and the school is deservedly building an excellent reputation in the area. It is providing good value for money.

The headteacher shows a strong determination to raise standards and her considerable skills are complemented by those of the deputy headteacher. Together they make a formidable team. All staff, including those with management responsibilities, support the improvement programme wholeheartedly, determined to raise standards and to provide the best possible quality of education for all pupils.

There is an improving trend in standards across the school which is the result of good teaching and effective management strategies. Overall, standards in the current Year 6 are broadly average. Given their well below expected skills on entry to Reception, this represents good achievement by these pupils. However, Year 6 pupils' performance in science, in which standards are above average, is better than it is in English and mathematics, in which standards are slightly below average. There are significant differences between the overall attainment of different year groups owing to their varying attainment on entry and to some having much higher proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have joined the school at times other than the usual. The much lower incidence of some of these factors in the current Year 2 and these pupils' excellent progress, stemming from some outstanding teaching in Years 1 and 2, means that their standards are above the school trend and above average. The outstanding support provided for pupils with the most significant learning difficulties enable them to make excellent progress. 'We chose the right school. remarkable progress' and 'Teachers do a brilliant job' are typical comments from parents that reflect pupils' improved achievement. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are above average. Pupils use computers confidently in all classes and use them well to support their learning in other subjects.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are correctly judged by the school to be outstanding. Pupils are very friendly and show great respect for staff and one another. Behaviour is excellent. Members of the school council say bullying is not a problem, only happening occasionally and when it does, teachers deal with it quickly. Pupils of all ages show a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and their extremely positive attitudes to school and keenness to learn help to equip them with the necessary skills for their future. Attendance is satisfactory. The school has very good procedures to check on and improve attendance. The school makes parents very aware of the benefits for pupils of regular attendance and punctuality.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Good relationships exist between pupils and their teachers and there is a calm, purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Good planning ensures that pupils have work that is matched well to their ability. Where teaching is outstanding, pupils find learning exciting and fun. For example, Year 1 thoroughly enjoyed their 'Rumble in the jungle' drama session, wearing animal masks and responding to the chief explorer's instructions. In a Year 6 science lesson, pupils were thoroughly engrossed in finding out the correct chemical to stop cut apples turning brown.

The curriculum is good. The recently introduced initiatives, such as linking subjects together so that pupils regularly use literacy, numeracy and their ICT skills, are contributing to rising

standards. Topics are planned on a two-year cycle to ensure that no pupils repeat work. Pupils enjoy a wide range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs, including maintaining an allotment and dancing. These experiences add to their enjoyment of learning.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Peer massage is one of a range of successful measures introduced by the learning mentor to promote pupils' emotional health. Staff know their pupils well and set challenging individual targets for them in English and mathematics. Pupils confidently assess their own work to identify ways to improve it.

Parents' views about the school are very positive. Many say that their children love school, 'They have a wonderful time at Highwood' and 'He cries when he can't go to school' are telling comments.

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features, the most notable being the leadership of the headteacher and how well equality is promoted. 'No-one thinks they are better than others' was a view expressed by the school council. Subject leaders are fully involved in evaluating the effectiveness of learning in their subjects. Governors are very supportive and carefully evaluate their own effectiveness. They are becoming increasingly involved in checking the school's performance in order to help to bring about further improvement. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress because of the effective quality of teaching and learning. Pupils enter Reception with skills that are generally well below those typical for their age, with many experiencing great difficulty in communicating. However, well planned activities, such as role play in the seaside area, successfully promote their speaking and listening skills. A strong emphasis on teaching letter sounds adds further to children's progress in their language development. There is a high priority given to developing children's positive attitudes to learning through good personal, social and emotional provision. At every opportunity, children are encouraged to be independent and to think for themselves. Adults enable children to build strong, positive relationships. As a result, all behave well, work cooperatively in small groups and enjoy a good range of indoor and outdoor activities, which are invariably challenging enough to hold their interest. The majority of children make good progress. Despite this, their overall skills remain below average by the time they transfer to Year 1.

Although the outdoor learning area is small for the number of children, the limited space is used well. Children's good progress is promoted through the different areas of learning, for instance when children test which objects float or sink, build with plastic crates or try to throw a ball accurately through a hoop. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and there are good links with parents.

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

- Raise standards in English and mathematics in Year 6.

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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?	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?	1
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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	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	3
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?	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?	1

<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>	2
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	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	1
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



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

Thank you for your warm welcome when I inspected your school. You go to a good school where some things are outstanding. Your parents are right to be proud of the school and what your headteacher has achieved since she arrived.

I really enjoyed talking with all of you and especially to members of the school council. It was hard to stop some of them talking when they started telling me about the things they enjoy! I understand why some of you are upset if you are ill and cannot come to school. The school council told me how equal you all feel and that you all have the same say in what happens. It is good that you get on so well with one another and your teachers. They work very hard to plan all the exciting, challenging and interesting things for you to do. Having your teachers dress up as an explorer or mad scientist certainly helps lessons to be lots of fun.

Children in Reception know their letter sounds really well and I enjoyed watching them find out which things float or sink. The other things that I thought were very good were Year 1 pretending to be wild animals in the hall, Year 2 using laptops so well and Year 6 learning how to give one another a relaxing back massage. Everyone in the school knows a lot about how to keep fit and healthy and I was most impressed to hear about your allotment.

I can see why all of you do well, especially in Years 1 and 2. I have asked the headteacher and staff to concentrate even more on improving reading, writing and mathematics skills by the time you leave Year 6.

Keep working hard, doing your best and enjoying yourself. Thank you again for making my inspection so enjoyable.