

# High Down Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109076
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	309869
<b>Inspection date</b>	1 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jill Arnold

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	174
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	146
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Marilyn Lane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrea Cowan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	31 January 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Down Road Portishead Portishead BS20 6DY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01275 843969
<b>Fax number</b>	01275 848003

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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation; the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); and how the school is closing the learning gap between boys and girls. Evidence was gathered from discussions with children, parents, staff and governors; observations of teaching, learning and break times; and review of school documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

The school is larger than average and includes EYFS provision for 56 children in the Nursery and 90 in three Reception classes. A junior school shares the same site. The majority of children come from favourable home circumstances and their skills on starting school are generally above those levels expected for their age. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much lower than average. The school has Healthy Schools, Active Mark and Leading Aspect (science) 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 is an outstanding school. Exceptional leadership and effective teamwork ensure that children receive high quality educational provision and care. The children thoroughly enjoy school and make consistently good, often exceptional progress, and attain high standards. Their excellent personal development makes a significant contribution to the welcoming and productive atmosphere in the school. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive and reflected the high regard they hold for the school. The following comment was typical of many received: 'We have been extremely pleased with High Down Infant School. Both our children have flourished under the care and teaching of all the staff at the school. We really couldn't have asked for more.'

The headteacher and senior staff form a successful leadership team. Their rigorous evaluation and effective target setting provide clear direction for the school's continuing improvement. The headteacher is knowledgeable and tenacious in her dedication to providing the best for the children. She has secured the staff's commitment to ensuring that learning is enjoyable and the children are taught consistently well, often inspirationally so. Discussion about how things might be even better is continually on the school's agenda. The monitoring of children's progress is rigorous, from the moment they start in the Nursery to the time they leave in Year 2. Great attention is given to providing effective guidance to support the progress of all children, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, all children achieve very well in relation to their various starting points. A significant proportion reach above average levels by the end of Year 2. Results in the 2008 national assessments were exceptionally high, with over half of Year 2 children reaching Level 3 in speaking and listening, reading and science. Almost half reached this level in writing and mathematics.

Girls tend to surpass boys in all areas of learning in the EYFS, and in reading and writing at Key Stage 1. High Down reflects the national picture in this respect. However, the school's actions to improve boys' achievement in reading and writing over the last two years have succeeded in narrowing the gap. These have included a range of imaginative approaches to teaching, employing resources and activities that appeal particularly to boys. The curriculum includes boy-friendly topics such as dinosaurs, castles and mini-beasts, which provide exciting vehicles for learning with plenty of practical, hands-on experiences. Both boys and girls enjoy these. The children particularly appreciate the creative curriculum that really makes learning enjoyable. As a parent commented, 'The emphasis at High Down is child-centred and most importantly FUN! The children learn through a rich and varied curriculum.' Skilful planning and teaching, informed by accurate assessment, enable teachers to build successfully on children's learning. A structured approach to teaching writing through immersion in non-fiction texts, together with encouraging creative expression through poetry and stories, is particularly successful. Teachers have high expectations and provide children with precise guidance so they are clear about what they are learning and what they need to work on next.

The wide range of trips, visitors, clubs and special weeks devoted to particular themes further enriches the curriculum. These activities contribute greatly to children's enjoyment of learning. Improvements since the school was last inspected have included provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE), which are also sources of great motivation for the children. Although the school has improved provision for multicultural education, it is not complacent, and is now developing international links to extend children's appreciation of the global community.

Children's personal development and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are outstanding. These are strongly promoted by the school's excellent care and curriculum. Children's behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. They make an excellent contribution to the school community, showing interest, care and respect for other people and their surroundings. They come up with imaginative ideas for improving the school environment and participate enthusiastically in community and charitable events. Playtimes are energetic yet harmonious, with older children looking after younger ones and organising equipment sensibly. In lessons, children concentrate and collaborate very well, becoming increasingly independent and able to evaluate their work as they mature. Children are confident to express their views and show increasing responsibility in the jobs they undertake in class and around the school as they get older. Their understanding of healthy lifestyles is excellent for their young ages and includes an awareness of why their vigorous playtimes and PE lessons are important. Children's excellent personal and social skills and their very good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills contribute strongly to their future economic well-being. Children feel safe and secure in the knowledge that there is always an adult to look after them or sort out a problem should the need arise. The school has stringent procedures to protect the health and safety of children and effective links with outside agencies and parents to support their well-being. The governing body is organised efficiently and fulfils its statutory duties. Governors care deeply about the children and bring a range of expertise to the governing body. Newer members are playing an increasingly effective part in monitoring the work of the school.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

All children make significant gains in their learning in the Nursery and Reception classes and achieve high standards by the time they start in Year 1. Their personal, social and emotional development and their physical development are particularly advanced. Outstanding leadership and strong teamwork ensure the range of experiences provided is stimulating and matched carefully to the children's interests and learning needs. Although girls tend to be more advanced than boys, the teachers are imaginative in their approach to captivating boys' interest as well as girls'. Knowing, for example, how the boys love to dig in the garden, phonic sessions begin with energetic foraging to uncover the laminated letters hidden in the soil! Teachers assess and monitor children's progress very rigorously and use the information to plan high quality, sharply focused activities that encourage the children to play a dynamic role in their learning. The children respond to challenge with great enthusiasm and imagination, and are willing to persevere at difficult tasks with the encouragement and support they receive. The learning environment is very well organised, including the outdoor space. The school plans to develop this area even further to extend opportunities for outdoor learning. The staff are committed to providing a high level of care to ensure the safety and well-being of the children. This includes very effective arrangements for children starting school, home visits, communication with parents and providing support early on for any children identified as being at risk. The high quality of the school's provision is recognised by the Bristol Standard for Quality Assurance in the Foundation Stage.

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

- Implement plans to extend international links and to improve outdoor learning opportunities for children in the EYFS.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	1

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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

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

4 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of High Down Infant School, Portishead, BS20 6DY

Thank you for your help when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you and your teachers. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Yours is an excellent school. The people in charge do an extremely good job of running your school and making sure that you achieve your very best. All the staff care for you very well indeed and the teachers plan activities that are fun and make you think hard. You really enjoy school, work hard and make exceptional progress. It helps that your teachers give very good advice and clear targets so you understand what is expected of you. You get off to a flying start in the Nursery and Reception classes and reach high standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science in Years 1 and 2. Your behaviour is outstanding. We were particularly impressed with how well you get on together and show respect for each other. This helps to make your school such a happy, welcoming place.

The people in charge already have very good ideas about how to make your school even better than it already is. All we have suggested is that they continue with their plans to improve the outside space for Nursery and Reception children and make links with schools overseas. You can help the people who run the school by continuing to come up with good ideas.

We agree with you and your parents that yours is a super school. Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jill Arnold Lead inspector