

Heron Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112190
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310807
Inspection date	6 June 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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	448
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Armstrong
Headteacher	Mr Paul Gardner
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2005
School address	Hayfell Avenue Kendal Cumbria LA9 7JH
Telephone number	01539 773639
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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: achievement and standards in mathematics, progress in the Foundation Stage and the quality and use of systems to assess and track pupils' progress. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, and classroom observations. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and governors, and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. 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, given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools and occupies a large site in the south of Kendal. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Favourable socio-economic circumstances are reflected in the low proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and has Training School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Heron Hill Primary is a good school that gives good value for money due to good leadership and the effective teamwork of the staff and governors. Excellent enrichment activities, community partnerships and international links considerably broaden pupils' academic, social and cultural experiences. The school is a harmonious community with a caring and happy atmosphere in a safe, attractive environment. Parents are pleased with the quality of education provided and all the extra activities on offer and many commented on how much their children enjoy school.

Achievement is good. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills typical for their age. However, school data over recent years shows an increasing number enter the nursery with lower than expected skills in communication and language, personal and mathematical development. Progress is good throughout the school. Standards at Key Stage 1 are above average. A slight dip in previous years was swiftly addressed, particularly in writing, and ensured an improvement in the 2007 results. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress and by the time they leave standards in all subjects are significantly above those achieved nationally. The emphasis on developing literacy skills successfully raised standards in English, but diverted resources and attention away from mathematics where, despite results being above average in 2007, some pupils missed their expected targets especially at the higher levels. School tracking information shows that pupils currently in Year 6 are making the progress expected of them and are on course to meet their targets in English and science but may again miss those for mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive skilled support.

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils understand the importance of good health, reflected in the high take-up of physical activities. They behave well, feel safe and say school rules are fair. They value the rewards and trust staff to help them with any problems. Enthusiasm for school means pupils work hard and progress well and attendance is well above average. Spiritual, moral and social development is good and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are very aware of the needs of others and excellent global links enable them to consider very different lifestyles and world religions. One said 'We learn from our visitors' when they met Tanzanian representatives. Pupils are keen to exchange information and organise fund-raising events for children in Tanzania and Ukraine. Closer to home, pupils participate in many local events, for example, Year 5 pupils were rehearsing songs for the Kendal schools musical event. Older pupils relish responsibilities as playtime 'buddies' and school councillors playing their part in making school better for everyone. Good personal, social and academic skills prepare pupils well for their future lives.

Teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and organised. Pupils know they are expected to work hard, listen carefully and make good progress. They say teachers give them lots of guidance to improve their work and reach their targets, one pupil remarking 'Teachers explain things and help us so we'll understand'. Skilled teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning and welfare, providing good support for individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for pupils with particular skills and talents who achieve well. The broad and balanced curriculum is skilfully adapted to meet the learning needs of all pupils so they progress well. A good personal and social development programme results in pupils who grow into very responsible members of the community. Pupils and their parents appreciate the excellent range of enrichment activities and after-school clubs such as the opportunities for older pupils to

learn German and write to pen-friends in Rinteln, Kendal's twin town. Pupils particularly enjoy residential experiences and curriculum visits that bring learning to life; for example, Year 3 pupils enjoyed dressing in costume during their recent visit to the Roman fort at Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall.

Good relationships throughout the school support learning effectively. Pupils are well cared for and arrangements for safeguarding meet current requirements. Many external agencies are used to benefit pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good assessment and tracking systems give staff a clear picture of pupils' progress and where to direct extra help. However, outcomes in mathematics indicate that further work in tracking and monitoring is needed to set suitable yet challenging targets.

The headteacher, leadership team and the staff have a clear vision for school improvement which is supported well by the governing body. Governors are actively involved and well informed to challenge and hold the school to account. School self-evaluation is honest and accurate and actions are now in place to boost standards in mathematics. The budget is managed prudently. A very strong emphasis on professional development links performance management systems and in-service training directly to improvement plans. Arrangements to monitor teaching and learning are in place, but more needs to be done to ensure the best practice is spread more consistently throughout the school. The school has worked hard since the last inspection to address the areas for improvement. All the issues have been tackled rigorously, and pupil progress has improved. There is a firm foundation and good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The children feel safe, secure and eager to learn because they are well cared for. Imaginative teaching and a wide range of practical activities link areas of learning effectively and stimulate children's natural inquisitiveness so they make good progress. For example, after hearing the story 'Shark in the Park' Reception children busily searched for concealed imaginary sharks in the outdoor area. This activity effectively developed their knowledge of the natural world, encouraged them to observe closely, increased their counting skills and widened their vocabulary. However, learning outdoors does not feature regularly enough. Good leadership ensures progress is carefully tracked and extra help directed appropriately. At the end of the Foundation Stage, the children are working securely at the levels expected for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and embed the tracking and monitoring procedures used to set accurate pupil targets in this subject.
- Extend the monitoring of teaching and learning and ensure good practice is shared consistently throughout the school.

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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 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

8 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Heron Hill Primary School, Cumbria, LA9 7JH

Thank you for making me very welcome when I inspected your school. You were really helpful so I was able to complete my work and see many things that you are proud of at school. I could tell you are all happy and I know your parents are pleased that you enjoy school. I was really impressed by Year 5 children's singing as they rehearsed for the music event and by Year 6 children's Egyptian dancing. I thought you would like to hear what I found out.

You go to a good school. You make good progress, from the time you start in the Nursery and all the way through school. The school cares for you well so you feel safe and concentrate in your lessons. By the time you leave, the standards in your work are above those in other schools, especially in English. This is because you work hard and you have good teachers who plan interesting lessons and activities. You have an excellent range of clubs and extra activities; some of you said how much you were looking forward to the next residential visit.

I was pleased to see that you behave well and look after your health and are keen recyclers. The school councillors try to make school better for everyone and I know the buddies do a good job to make playtime a happy time for everyone. The way you help others in the local community and around the world is excellent. The visitors from Tanzania told me how much they appreciate your help for their school and Year 6 were busy completing brochures to send to the children there. All these activities prepare you well for your future lives.

You have good leaders who are helped by good staff and governors. I have asked them to help you do even better in mathematics. They are going to check the quality of teaching more thoroughly so the teachers share their best ideas.

I am sure you will want to help them by working hard and enjoying everything you do at Heron Hill School.

Best wishes to you all

Kathleen McArthur

Lead inspector