

Old Hall Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112669
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310974
Inspection date	11 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Jones
Headteacher	Mrs S Stone
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	Old Road Brampton Chesterfield Derbyshire S40 3QR
Telephone number	01246 273 801
Fax number	01246 273 801

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' standards and achievement by the end of Year 6; the impact of leadership and management on achievement; the quality of teaching and learning in promoting pupils' progress and whether the large numbers in classes is having an adverse impact on progress. Evidence was gathered from the school's data, pupils' work, observations of teaching and school life, scrutiny of parental questionnaires and discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found 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, which is in a Victorian building, is popular with parents and, with a roll of 279 pupils, has become oversubscribed. There are two classes for each year group which means all classes have over 30 pupils, numbering into the high thirties in Years 3 and 6. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average. Their home backgrounds are very largely favourable, so the impact of social and economic deprivation on the school is very low. The large majority of pupils are White British. A few are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

The school and the local infant school collaborate on the professional development of staff. There is a link with a sports college which contributes to provision for physical education and sports. Pupils learn to play a variety of musical instruments and participate in the school orchestra, choir and wind band. The school gained its second Basic Skills Award in 2007; it has Health Promoting Schools Status and the Derbyshire County Council's Anti-Bullying Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Old Hall Junior provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Standards attained by pupils in Year 6 are consistently above average in English, mathematics and science. Given their starting points, this represents sound progress and achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties, and the few learning to speak English as an additional language, benefit from the support of a good number of teaching assistants and they make satisfactory progress. While the proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected levels in English and mathematics in 2007 was greater than that nationally, the number doing so fell below the school's targets. Targets were challenging but realistically based on the number of pupils that could be predicted to achieve the expected levels or higher. In 2007, test results were best in mathematics. Standards were well above average although they were slightly short of the targets set by the school. Nevertheless, pupils made good progress in mathematics. In English, standards in writing fell short of the school's expectations, particularly for boys. Standards in reading were stronger than in writing. Pupils find that their class targets for mathematics are more helpful than for literacy because they are written in a clear, understandable way. The school's analysis of pupils' performance is thorough enough to enable accurate targets to be set in relation to pupils' standards. Furthermore, analysis has highlighted where pupils have underperformed. Leaders are taking measures to raise achievement overall and specifically, to deal with underachievement of some boys in writing.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons vary in quality in the extent to which they engage and motivate pupils in learning. In some, teaching is good, and even outstanding, in the way it excites and challenges pupils. Here, teachers have a positive relationship with pupils and know them well. This strong rapport is reflected effectively in planning lessons and their challenge. This is the case in lessons where small groups of pupils are given additional support for literacy and numeracy. Elsewhere, in an excellent mathematics lesson, a game using fractions, decimals and percentages played on the electronic whiteboard had pupils on the edge of their seats and thinking as hard as they could. Where teaching is good, the pace of learning is brisk. Too often teaching does not stimulate the high level of enthusiasm of which pupils are capable and it was possible to see from their expressions they were only moderately interested in their work. The pace of learning is sometimes slow. While most classrooms are sufficient for the numbers taught in them, small classrooms with large groups have an adverse impact on pupils' concentration. The work by leaders on improving the quality of teaching and learning is widely seen in features such as clearly stated lesson objectives, the style of questioning and pupils' participation in assessment. However, the skill with which these features are used to strengthen learning varies considerably.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In particular, the evaluation of pupils' performance and the monitoring of teaching and learning are giving the governors and all school leaders the appreciation they need of standards and achievement. There is a clear direction and raised expectations in relation to improving achievement, which is shared throughout the school. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. The gradual rise in achievement over the past few years indicates the initiatives to improve teaching and provision are having the desired effect. The focus on supporting specific groups of pupils with literacy and numeracy in particular is noticeable. All safeguarding requirements are met. The school has a strong ethos and well defined values that serve effectively in ensuring pupils' care, guidance and support is good. This gains the praise of parents, a great many of who express positive views about the school.

Many also have concerns about the large class sizes and the effect this may have on their children's progress. However, the school and governors have done as much as possible to reduce any limitations caused by the accommodation. The quality of teaching and learning is a more decisive factor in the rate of pupils' progress. The school has done well to find additional space for groups of pupils to be given a higher level of support in literacy and numeracy.

Pupils like school a lot and their attendance is excellent. A good curriculum, especially the wide choice of extra activities including sports and music, makes a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment and to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Recent changes to timings in the school day has helped broaden the curriculum and make it more interesting for pupils. Pupils behave well and they have a strong sense of responsibility towards school and the community, and in helping to raise money and resources for good causes throughout the world. Personal development is good. Pupils respond positively to the school's effective promotion of a healthy lifestyle and staying safe. They are open-minded and are confident in tackling challenges. As a result, they are prepared well for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standard of writing, especially that of boys, by ensuring all of the measures being taken to strengthen the provision for literacy are implemented effectively.
- Monitor the initiatives to improve teaching and evaluate how well these are used by all teachers to make learning more effective.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
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	2

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?	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?	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Hall Junior School, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. S40 3QR

Many thanks for your warm welcome when I visited your school for its inspection. I am very grateful to the members of the school council who agreed to meet me and discuss their views of your school. I found that really helpful in deciding what I should say about your school.

Your school is good in some important ways. Your work and activities provide you with many challenges and interesting things to do, which you have told me you greatly enjoy, especially the sports and music. The staff are doing a good job in making sure you are cared for and kept safe and healthy. You treat seriously staying safe and healthy. That says a lot about how well you are growing into responsible individuals with a real concern about the welfare of others.

Your teachers are helping you think about your progress through the use of targets. Your progress is satisfactory, although most of the work you do is of a good standard, especially mathematics. I agree with your headteacher that standards in writing are probably too low at the moment. Staff are keeping a close eye on your results, which is showing the way to improving lessons and to you making better progress.

I have asked your headteacher to carry on with improving lessons and your progress, particularly in writing.

I wish you all well in the future.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector