

Heatherlands First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113698
Local Authority	Poole
Inspection number	311340
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Craddock
Headteacher	Sally Burns
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2003
School address	Library Road Parkstone Poole BH12 2BG
Telephone number	01202 743918
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Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Heatherlands is a large first school. Its growing popularity is evident in the significant minority of pupils who come from outside the local area. This has led to rising standards on entry, which are currently around the level expected except in early literacy skills. Until recently they were below average, especially so in literacy. There are a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups, a few of whom speak English as an additional language. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Heatherlands is a good and improving school with significant strengths in some areas of its work. This is largely because of the exceptional vision of the headteacher and senior leadership team. They are successfully driving forward developments and the school is well placed to improve further. Staff and governors support school development well. This, together with the outstanding partnerships established with parents and other schools or agencies, benefits pupils' learning and well-being especially well. As a result, pupils love school and parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the high levels of care and support their children receive.

A key to the school's growing success is, as one parent wrote, 'the joined up approach between child, family and good teaching. Heatherlands has a great community feeling where children feel they belong.' It is especially evident in the outstanding levels of care and support given to pupils in ensuring their safety and well-being and in helping them to improve their work. This is because the school integrates its systems of support for all aspects of pupils' development. As soon as a pupil looks as though they might be underperforming, a thorough analysis to ascertain whether they have physical, emotional or learning needs helps the school to put in place very effective procedures to address them.

Senior staff have wisely prioritised improvement areas, focusing initially on the slower aspects of pupils' progress. This has increased the rate of progress, particularly in English, where spelling has improved immensely, although the school recognises that still more needs to be done, especially in handwriting and constructing sentences correctly. Nevertheless, provision in the Foundation Stage and other year groups is good. As a result throughout the school pupils achieve well and standards are rising. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 3, overall standards are close to national expectations and above this in science because of the very good emphasis placed on learning through an investigative approach. This represents good progress for these pupils, who had levels of skills and knowledge below expectations, significantly so in English, when they joined in Reception.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is evident in their great enthusiasm for school and improved attendance levels, which are average. Pupils have an excellent awareness of ways they can keep healthy and safe, which supports their well-being particularly well. The vast majority of pupils behave exceptionally well despite the growing number who have specific emotional or behavioural needs. This is because of the excellent support and guidance for these pupils, especially by the school's inclusion manager and children's support worker.

The good teaching has some significant strengths because senior leadership team members are excellent role models, demonstrating outstanding teaching skills which are increasingly being adopted throughout the school. In particular, behaviour management and the way pupils are involved in checking on how well they are doing and inspired to do even better are very good. Teaching assistants support learning exceptionally well, particularly when working with groups as part of the school's letters and sounds scheme. The curriculum has improved well over the last year with a greater emphasis on planning activities that are more practical and interesting for pupils. An excellent scheme for the teaching of English is already accelerating progress, particularly in reading. The school has been slower in encouraging pupils to use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects although this is a current priority for development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry has improved and is around expectations although lower in some key literacy skills. Children's good progress results in standards being above expectations by the end of Reception and the proportion of children reaching the expected level for their age is higher than in most schools. Good teaching exhibits strengths seen throughout the school, ensuring a consistent approach when children move on to Year 1. Over the past year a new scheme of work for literacy has been introduced and teaching in this aspect is outstanding. As a result children make very good progress in developing their reading and writing skills. This term an emphasis on making learning in mathematics fun is already improving progress. Staff have an exceptionally good understanding of the need to plan short bursts of very focused activities in order to keep children interested. There is also a good range of activities where children work independently and find out things for themselves. Some children, mainly boys, find concentration difficult and there are a few occasions when adults do not ensure that they are engaged in their independent activities. The provision is very well led and managed. In particular, information from the excellent procedures for monitoring and supporting children's development is used particularly well to improve their progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by ensuring that pupils become competent in handwriting and sentence construction so that they can concentrate more on the content of what they write.
- Give pupils more opportunities to use their information and communication technology skills to help their learning in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards in all year groups are rising. Over the past year, progress in English has been very good. The very good focus on meeting individual pupils' needs ensures that those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as their classmates.

Reception children make good progress and very good progress in reading and writing, so standards have risen and are now above expectations by the time they enter Year 1. By the end of Year 2 standards are average and in line with expectations by Year 3. This demonstrates good progress from the levels these pupils were at when they started in Reception. In English, standards are better in reading than writing because pupils find it more difficult to write in an interesting way, as they still have to concentrate hard on how to use punctuation and write grammatically. In Years 2 and 3, standards in science are above average because pupils are becoming skilled at investigating why things happen or how they work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The excellent level of care and pastoral support pupils receive, together with the emphasis on making learning interesting and meaningful, results in pupils' great enthusiasm for school and commitment to hard work. One parent put the views of many when writing, 'The school focuses on making learning fun, on developing self-esteem and confidence and ensuring children are happy.' Excellent relationships between staff and pupils result in the school being an

exceptionally happy place. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils are caring and friendly so incidences of unkind behaviour are very rare.

Pupils are very proud of the wealth of information they know about how to keep healthy and safe and the school holds the Healthy School and Activemark awards. Pupils feel very safe and well cared for in school. They contribute well to the life of the school and local community and are aware of their social responsibility, for example of the need to recycle what they can. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility very much, as a member of the school council or as a VIP (monitor). As one pupil commented, 'When I am a VIP I feel a very special person.' The good development of these skills, along with pupils' good progress in literacy and numeracy, prepares them well for their future. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with moral and social development being especially strong. Multicultural awareness, fostered through areas such as the strengthening links with a French school and the school's Diwali display, is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Underpinned by the excellent practice shared by the senior leadership team, a strong feature is the growing consistency of approach. Curriculum developments have improved the quality of planning so that individual pupils' needs are met well. Pupils are made very aware of what they need to do to succeed and staff are skilled at questioning and probing pupils to help them understand.

Very good behaviour management allows lesson times to be spent on learning which is always rigorous when the whole class works directly with a teacher or assistant. However, in group or independent activities a few pupils find it difficult to stay focused. When this happens, staff are sometimes slow to intervene and put them back on track. Well qualified and skilled teaching assistants support learning exceptionally well, particularly when working with different groups in English. A highly successful feature of teaching is the way that pupils are encouraged to continually check on how well they are doing and the excellent advice they are given on how to improve. For example, pupils have many opportunities to discuss things with a partner and to check their progress against their personal curriculum targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is innovative and creative so that it enthralls and engages pupils and is helping to bring about improved progress. Activities are especially well matched to the level at which individual pupils are working. In particular the reading and writing programmes are having a major impact on raising standards. A new approach to mathematics this term, planning a greater range of practical and fun activities, is successfully improving progress in lessons. However, there has been insufficient time for this to have had an impact on standards. In Year 3 more is being done to encourage pupils to use their ICT skills in different subjects, but this has yet to be introduced into other year groups. The programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is excellent as is the provision for outdoor activities. In particular the nature trail, adventure trail and garden enhance pupils' learning and enthusiasm for school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely well cared for because of the outstanding systems in place for ensuring their safety and welfare. This is acknowledged by pupils and their parents. Procedures for child protection, risk assessment and staff vetting are fully in place and rigorous. Support and guidance for pupils' personal and academic development are outstanding. This is the result of the excellent attention paid to their individual needs and a coherent approach, which considers pupils' emotional, social or behavioural difficulties together with their learning needs. An excellent reward system encourages high standards of behaviour. The quality of marking and use of individual pupils' targets to help them improve are especially good. Partnerships with other agencies are outstanding. Together with the excellent work undertaken by the inclusion leader and children's support worker this ensures pupils are given exceptional support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A major strength is the vision and proactive leadership of the headteacher and senior leadership team. This ensures that the whole school is working successfully towards the goal of providing the very best education for each pupil. Parents are unanimous that the outstanding partnership the school has forged with them benefits their children's progress considerably. There are very good systems in place for checking on how well the school is doing and the rate of pupils' progress. The information from this has been used successfully to help improve progress and raise standards. Development planning is very good and the school sets itself challenging improvement targets. Staff with subject responsibilities make a major contribution to raising standards. The school is now devolving more responsibility to year leaders although it is too soon to see the full effect of their work. The inclusion manager's contribution to the enhanced progress of pupils with specific needs is excellent. Governors are knowledgeable, hard-working and very supportive. They are fully involved in school monitoring and development and support its work well.

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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	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	2

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	2
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	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?	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

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	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	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

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heatherlands First School, Poole, BH12 2BG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the school council who gave up their lunchtime to speak to us. Heatherlands is a good school and we were delighted that you and your parents agree. Some things are excellent already.

- This is what we thought was good about the school.
- You enjoy school very much and work hard. Your behaviour is excellent and you know a great number of ways to keep healthy and safe.
- Adults take excellent care of you and give you lots of particularly good advice to help you improve your work and do your best.
- Children in Reception get a good start and progress in all year groups is good. Over the last year you have made very good progress in English and you continue to do well in science.
- We agree that learning is fun because staff plan interesting activities which encourage you to do your best. They help you to understand things easily and give you lots of help and support.
- Those of you who need special help get lots of very good support.
- The school is excellent at working with your parents to make sure that they can help you learn as well. Your parents were very pleased about this.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are working well to help your school improve and are determined to make things even better.
- What we have asked your school to do now.
- Help you to do as well in writing as you do in reading by making sure that you become very good at using the right punctuation and writing your sentences correctly. You can help by trying very hard to do these things well so you can concentrate more on making your writing interesting.
- Give you more opportunities to use computers to help you learn.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

D Wilkinson Lead Inspector

30 November 2007

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D Wilkinson
Lead Inspector