

Heron Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115749
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312052
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Owen
Headteacher	John Coles
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Heron Way Abbeydale Gloucester GL4 4BN
Telephone number	01452 415105
Fax number	01452 415115

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Inspection number	312052

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following: • the pupils' achievement, with a particular focus on changing attainment on entry and the progress of more able pupils • whether pupils' personal development is good or outstanding • the use of assessment to help match work to the needs of all pupils • how effectively leaders use information from monitoring to improve the school. Evidence was gathered from observations around the school, discussions with pupils and staff, and analyses of the school's working documents and questionnaires completed by parents. Other aspects of the school were not inspected 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

The school is larger than average, with two parallel classes in each year group. It serves a modern residential area on the fringe of the city. The school is full and unable to meet all the requests for admissions each year. Most pupils are White British and very few are learning English as an additional language. The attainment of children on entry to the Foundation Stage is broadly similar to that expected for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than found nationally. Most of the school underwent substantial refurbishment during the summer. Some of this work was deferred owing to the extensive flooding in the region at the time.

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. It has significant features that are outstanding and serves its community very well. Pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being are key aspects of its success. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the school and the many interesting experiences they share, and their attendance is above the national average. Almost all parents are supportive of all aspects of the school. One parent reflected the feelings of many others by commenting, 'Heron is a very good school. My child is happy and enjoys going there.' Another wrote, 'The school has a deservedly good local reputation.' The headteacher and senior staff provide effective leadership and are always looking to improve existing good practice. The school has well-structured systems for checking its work and an accurate view of its performance. This has led to significant progress since the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further.

The care, guidance and support for pupils are outstanding and involve all members of staff. This high level of care and support leads to the particularly friendly and open atmosphere around the school throughout the day and pupils' high levels of self-esteem. Pupils smile a lot and are exceptionally polite and well behaved. They feel very safe and are confident that the school would act swiftly if they had a problem. The school rigorously implements all the statutory procedures designed to safeguard pupils. All the adults work with great commitment to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils, in very close partnership with parents and other professionals. This is recognised by the parents of such pupils, one of whom wrote, 'The school has done everything it possibly can for her'. Staff readily attend additional training in their own time to enable them to support specific pupils. A national charity has recognised the school for its outstanding care and support for pupils. It distributes a DVD of the school's work to interested schools across the country. Pupils are particularly thoughtful about those less fortunate than they are and enthusiastically participate in fundraising events. Many carry out roles of responsibility, such as gathering the fruit peelings for recycling, or as class monitors and school councillors. They feel valued and very pleased to be involved in helping to run the school. A clear example of this is the school council's idea to introduce what is now a very popular salad bar at lunchtimes, reflecting pupils' excellent awareness of the importance of a healthy diet.

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress by the end of their first year. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well in all years. By the end of Year 6, standards are consistently above the national average, particularly in English and mathematics. Pupils currently in Years 2 and 6 are on track to reach their end-of-year targets and maintain above average standards. Pupils make good progress in their speaking and listening skills through the early years, providing a firm foundation for learning across all subjects. There are many positive features within teaching but pupils make good rather than outstanding progress because in some lessons, teachers' introductions and the work set are not sufficiently well matched to their pupils' different levels of need and understanding. On a few occasions, the most able pupils are marking time during whole-class explanations and plenary sessions. Teachers provide a broad and stimulating range of experiences and activities for their pupils. The school has received the Arts Mark Gold and Active Mark Gold awards in recognition of some outstanding features of this broad curriculum that contribute to the pupils' high levels of enjoyment and motivation. Teachers plan in year teams using well-structured curricular guidance that helps to link subjects. In some lessons, the curriculum

is not fully adapted to reflect the needs of the most able. Pupils respond very well to the teachers' imaginative use of computers and technology, for example the videoconferencing in history and a special 'talking pen' to help a pupil learning English as an additional language. Pupils collaborate exceptionally well when working in small groups, for example when preparing for the Year 6 'Evacuate, evacuate' production. These collaborative study skills successfully promote learning and are an important feature in demonstrating the way in which pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of education and adult life. Teaching assistants contribute well to the effective learning of small groups but sometimes opportunities are missed for them to be actively involved with pupils when the teacher is leading the whole class. There is a wide range of high quality additional activities beyond the classroom and school day. The International School Award reflects the way effective links overseas enhance pupils' appreciation of other cultures, as do experiences such as singing at the National Indoor Arena. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is constrained by the limited outdoor facilities.

Pupils are guided well by their teachers. They appreciate the way teachers explain things and help them to be clear about what it is they are learning. They understand the marking code and find their carefully chosen targets in literacy and numeracy to be helpful.

The school's Investors in People status was recently renewed. An important element of the effective leadership and management is the example set by the headteacher and the way he guides colleagues, enabling them to develop their leadership roles. He encourages them to lead new initiatives, such as enriching the curriculum or establishing ways to involve pupils in the assessment of their work. Leaders participate fully in the systematic monitoring of all aspects of the school's performance and use the information well to improve practice. The school is establishing clear systems for sharing its comprehensive assessment data, and leaders use this assessment information well to plot the progress of different groups and to set challenging targets. Not all teachers make consistently good use of this data when planning work for different ability groups in their lessons. Governors are well qualified and fulfil their roles effectively. They are fully involved in strategic decisions and constructively hold the school to account.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents appreciate their children's sensitive and careful introduction to school. The children respond well to the mainly good teaching and almost all make good progress in all areas of learning. By the end of the year, standards are above average. The Foundation Stage is led well and there is some effective use of the recently improved internal accommodation to provide a stimulating learning environment. The school's plans to provide an all-weather shelter and external storage facilities were delayed by the flooding. In the meantime, teachers are not consistently making the best use of the designated outdoor area and this is limiting the range of adult-led activities and opportunities for children to move freely in and out of doors when learning through independent play.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve pupils' achievement by ensuring teachers consistently match work in lessons to the different abilities of their pupils, particularly those who are more able
- strengthen the curriculum in the Foundation Stage by improving the outdoor facilities and increasing the opportunities for independent play.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	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	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

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	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

19 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heron Primary School, Gloucester GL4 4BN

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed talking to some of you, visiting your classrooms and seeing some of your work. I was particularly impressed by the exceptionally friendly way you all greeted me as I moved around the school, and I know your parents are very pleased you go to Heron School. You were right to tell me that Heron School is a good school in which some things are brilliant. Here are some of the highlights:

- you all told me how much you like the school and enjoy the many exciting and interesting activities your teachers plan in the classroom and special events, such as videoconferencing or rehearsing for the 'Evacuate, evacuate' production
- you should be proud of your excellent behaviour and the very thoughtful way you care for one another and those less fortunate than yourselves
- you work hard in lessons and make good progress, especially in literacy and numeracy
- many of you were keen to tell me about different things you do to help, such as recycling the fruit peelings, working as monitors in classes, serving on the school council or running for charity
- all the adults who work in the school take great care to make sure you are safe and to help you when you are worried or have a problem
- the headteacher, other leaders and governors are always thinking of ways to make the school even better. They carefully check to make sure everything is happening as it should around the school.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on just two things to help you make even better progress. They are:

- help teachers make sure the work set is adapted to your different needs, especially for those of you who find your lessons easy, so work is neither too hard nor too easy
- improve the outdoor facilities for the children in the Reception classes so they can choose from a wider range of activities.

I know you are all totally committed to Heron Primary and will continue all your work around the school to keep it such a good place to be.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Kerly Lead Inspector