

Highbury Primary School, Nursery and Day Care

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116196
Local Authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	312210
Inspection dates	13–14 December 2007
Reporting inspector	David Marshall

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	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Gratton
Headteacher	Miss D Morrell-Glenister
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2006
School address	Dovercourt Road Cosham Portsmouth PO6 2RZ
Telephone number	02392 375404
Fax number	02392 380462

Age group	2-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Highbury is an above average sized primary school. Very few of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Free school meal eligibility is close to the national average as is the school deprivation indicator. Very few pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above average, although the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is low. A well above average number of pupils join and leave the school other than at the usual times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Highbury is now a satisfactory school with good elements. All adults involved with the school have improved the quality of education a great deal in the last year but, as they acknowledge, there is still more to be done to raise standards and accelerate achievement. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Pupils join the school with a range of skills but, taken overall, their attainment is below average. Children in the Foundation Stage are now getting off to a good start because every effort is made to help them develop independence and the skills of working alongside others. Provision in Key Stage 1 is now satisfactory. Assessment data is being used to set targets for individual pupils and to share these targets with them. However, this not yet fully established through the school, so the level of challenge and pace is not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities. After two years of declining results in national tests, 2007 saw a rise in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 and standards amongst current pupils are now average. One of the main reasons for this improvement is that expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher because of these improved systems for assessment and monitoring.

The targets set for 2008 are challenging but, in light of the improving quality of teaching, they are appropriate. Pupils appreciate their teachers' efforts to make lessons interesting. Staff are generally clear about what pupils are expected to learn in each lesson, and plan activities to hold pupils' interest. The written comments provided for pupils usually contribute to the feedback they are given, but there are inconsistencies. As a result, some do not have a very clear understanding of how they are doing and, crucially, what they need to do to improve. Training has improved the quality of support provided by the significant number of adults employed in classrooms and for intervention groups, but this remains an area for development.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They enjoy their lessons and behave well. Relationships are positive, and they are caring and polite to each other, staff and visitors. One typical comment was, 'This is a really friendly place'. Pupils have a good grasp of what constitutes a healthy diet and know that exercise is good for them. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

There are strongly conflicting views amongst parents. Many hold the school in high regard and commented on the recent improvements, and the care shown by all staff. Many parents agreed with the sentiments of one who described, 'a lovely friendly and helpful school.' However, there are some parents who, despite the many newsletters and updates, feel that they are not being kept fully in the picture about what is happening in the school and, in particular, for their own children. The school agrees they must address this issue of communication with real urgency.

Staff are vigilant to pupils' needs, enabling them to learn and play in a safe and secure learning environment. Thanks to the school's good systems, pupils' attendance rates are now similar to that in most schools. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school has appropriate plans for development. The effective leadership of the headteacher ensures that all staff are working tirelessly to identify and tackle the many areas identified to move the school forward. There is a genuine feeling of teamwork amongst all adults who share a vision of continued improvement. Leaders and managers have worked hard and should now increase the pace of improvement by implementing agreed and shared initiatives. There is satisfactory capacity to secure further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Thorough starting arrangements ensure that each child's individual ability is quickly and carefully assessed, enabling the school to meet their different needs effectively. As a result, children settle in quickly, are well versed in class routines and make good progress. Careful planning builds on what has already been learned. Staff provide an exciting range of stimulating learning opportunities. There is a good balance of adult-led and free choice activities. All children show great enjoyment in their learning and they work and play together very well because personal and social skills are given a high priority. They now make good progress because the staff have a very good understanding of how young children learn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that recent assessment and tracking systems are used effectively by all staff; remove inconsistencies in marking to enable pupils to evaluate and build on their own achievements.
- Use the well-developed staff team as leaders and managers to accelerate the pace of innovation and change.
- Make strenuous efforts to remedy the lack of confidence in the school felt by some parents.

A small proportion of 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From their starting points, pupils' achievement in reaching average standards by Year 6 is satisfactory. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage because of good planning and thoughtful teaching. Recognising that standards by Year 2 were declining, the school has worked determinedly to improve pupils' basic skills and confidence. This is leading to significant improvements in pupils' progress.

There is now a better system to track the progress each pupil makes and identify where additional teaching will be most beneficial. As a result, pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making satisfactory progress, an improvement on previous years. Standards this year in the national tests were significantly higher in all subjects and broadly in line with expectations for their age. Targets for attainment in 2008 are high, but tracking systems show they are realistic. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make sound progress and the encouragement they receive from the support assistants is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about many aspects of school life. They enjoy lessons and the extra curricular activities, trips and visits that contribute well to learning and social development. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. The response of older pupils during an exciting assembly showed the strength of their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils willingly follow the rules that are displayed in classrooms, and say the rare incidents of bullying

or poor behaviour are dealt with very well. They say that there is always someone who will listen to them. Attendance is satisfactory and improving because most pupils really want to come to school. The school council has been responsible for a variety of important health and safety initiatives. Pupils' contribution to the local and wider community is good, particularly in their support for a range of charities and local events. Pupils take on real responsibilities such as Playground Buddies and co-operate and work effectively together, preparing them satisfactorily for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and pockets of inadequate teaching have been eradicated. This is leading to the pupils making more consistently satisfactory progress across the school. The school has worked hard to focus on bringing about these improvements, for example by carefully monitoring lessons and using good support from the local authority. Much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good. In the best examples, teachers planned interesting work and used brisk, lively teaching to capture the interests of pupils. Consequently, pupils worked hard, behaved well and made good progress. Although pupils usually know what they are expected to learn in lessons, on occasions instructions are given in language that is too complex for them to understand. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties during group activities but they are sometimes not guided well enough to be effective during class teaching sessions. Marking has improved. Although some teachers use their written comments well to help pupils improve, this is not yet sufficiently consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, the curriculum has improved and now ensures that pupils build on their previous learning. The school provides targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties to bridge gaps in their learning. The more able are identified and supported well. The curriculum now meets legal requirements, embraces the latest national guidance for literacy and numeracy and includes intervention strategies that boost the progress of targeted pupils in these subjects. The school has rightly set its sights on developing the curriculum further to enable pupils to reach higher levels of achievement. Enthusiastic curriculum leaders have accurately identified a need to develop stronger links between subjects and plans for a more creative, theme-based, curriculum are being phased in to be in all classes by 2009. A very good range of clubs are available for pupils and their enjoyment in the last two years has been enhanced by the very good and regular French/Spanish lessons. Partnerships with outside groups have led to good provision for art, drama and sport and led to the school gaining national awards for art and football.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school gives pupils satisfactory academic guidance. Through careful assessment, teachers now match their work better to the needs of pupils. Pupils have useful, individual, learning targets. However, these are not yet used consistently to help them make better progress. The pastoral care provided for all pupils is good. Staff, governors and the school council are well

aware of health and safety issues. There are appropriate procedures for child protection and assessing and dealing with risks. This ensures that pupils, including those who are more vulnerable, feel secure. School and class rules drawn up with pupils, reward good work and behaviour and pupils are very eager to gain this recognition.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, there are some good elements. The headteacher has continued to work well with the local authority and is following the school's own plan for raising achievement. Aspects of management have improved since the last inspection, and there is a stronger focus on raising standards and achievement. Self-evaluation involves middle as well as senior leaders and provides an accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, reflecting monitoring and analysis that are generally of appropriate rigour. Actions taken by the school have had a beneficial impact on the areas highlighted in the last inspection report. For instance, the recent analysis of pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy led by the deputy head is excellent, which means the school is now well placed and should speed up the planned changes to raise standards in these subjects further. Governors are taking an active role in monitoring the implementation of the action plan. They have improved their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are more confident in offering challenge as well as support.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	2
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

3 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highbury Primary School, Nursery and Day Care, Portsmouth, PO6 2RZ

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to us about your school and your work. We think the school provides you with a satisfactory education, but we agree with what you told us - it is getting better and better. The headteacher and teachers have created a caring school community where you enjoy learning and feel safe. You behave well in lessons and like to concentrate on your work. You also enjoy and benefit from the range of opportunities the school provides in clubs and visits to interesting places.

By the end of Year 6, standards are average but they could be higher. Some of you told us you find the aims of the lessons that the teachers set you are a bit confusing. We have asked the headteacher and teachers to make sure you always understand what they have told you to do so that you all make good progress in every lesson so that more of you will reach the highest levels.

The headteacher is keen to keep improving the school and, with the staff, knows exactly what to do to make the school even better. We have asked the teachers to speed up the changes they are planning to give you even more opportunities to learn. You must continue to listen carefully and take note of what they say.

Although most are pleased, some of your parents said they are not too happy with the information they receive from the school and how well you are progressing and how they can help you at home. We have asked the headteacher and staff to get in touch with all parents to make sure they are all pleased with all the school is doing for you.

Finally, we would like to thank you once again for all your help. We wish you well in the future.

With kind regards

David Marshall

Lead Inspector