

Highcliffe Primary School and Community Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120091
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313512
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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	429
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Hall
Headteacher	Iain Munro
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Greengate Lane Birstall Leicester LE4 3DL
Telephone number	0116 2101112
Fax number	0116 2101112

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Highcliffe Primary School and Community Centre has an above average number of pupils. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in most schools. The school has a below average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A higher than average number of pupils speak English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Highcliffe Primary School and Community Centre is an effective school where pupils are well cared for, achieve well and reach good standards. There are good relationships throughout the school, and pupils care for each other and coexist in a calm and happy environment. Standards when pupils leave the school are above average, and have been for several years. Pupils achieve well from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6. There has been a falling trend in standards in recent years in Key Stage 1, explained mainly by differences in attainment in particular year groups. The trend in the school now is clearly upwards again in the early years, where pupils are reaching higher standards again.

Parents are almost all very pleased with the school and many praise highly the work of the staff. The school is rigorous in the safeguarding it provides for pupils. The school has improved well in most aspects since the previous inspection three years ago. Most notable has been the significant improvement in the provision for music and information and communication technology (ICT). This has resulted in rising standards, especially in music. The introduction of good assessment strategies is also an improvement, especially in the Foundation Stage. The school leaders realise, however, that the data on learning which it produces is sometimes not used frequently enough to match the learning needs of individual pupils. This also means that the increasingly challenging learning targets being set are not always universally known or understood by staff. The school's self-evaluation is generally accurate but lacks detail on the impact of measures it takes. It relies on independent observers to offer detailed judgements.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy school, have consistently good attendance, and most feel well challenged. They have good attitudes to learning and behave consistently well in school and in public. They talk vividly about their enjoyment of many aspects of school, such as sport and their involvement in Eco-school studies. This assists them in their understanding of leading a healthy lifestyle. Their good standards, many opportunities to collect for charity, and contributions to the School Council prepare them well for their future lives.

The quality of teaching is good. This starts in the Reception classes, which are well managed and led, so that children have a good start to their school life. The good teaching continues through all year groups, and pupils' skills and learning develop particularly well in Year 6. Teachers organise and manage their classes well. There is some inconsistency in marking, and in helping pupils to know and understand their learning targets. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to the learning of pupils, especially to those most in need. This helps teachers to provide a good, well-balanced and enjoyable curriculum.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, especially in teaching. The whole staff shares his vision for improvement and innovation. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher and senior managers, who have demonstrated good capacity to improve. However, the recently changed staffing structure is not yet fully effective. Some senior managers have too many responsibilities. Other staff are members of management teams, but do not yet have sufficient time or responsibility to make a significant impact. The management of provision for the needs of pupils with learning and/or disabilities is particularly good. The governing body has recently had several changes in personnel. Under the leadership of a positive chair, the governors are very supportive of the school, and make a satisfactory contribution to its management.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In 2007, children entered the school with broadly average skills, although most children were above average in physical, personal, and social development. In recent years, the attainment on entry to the school has varied from above, to slightly below, average. An increasing number of children are coming to the school from a much wider area than in the past, including more children with English as an additional language. Most children make good progress in the Foundation Stage across all areas of development and nearly all have reached their early learning goals by the time they go into Year 1. The school is working hard to ensure that increasingly effective support is in place to help children make a good transition into the main school.

Good teaching in both classes is helping children make good progress, especially in developing independence and enthusiasm for learning. Good outdoor provision is promoted particularly well, both through teacher-directed activities and those that are child-initiated. The teachers are very well assisted by the learning support assistants in both classes. Assessment of children's progress has improved, and staff have a much clearer picture of how children are doing than in the past. There are strong relationships with parents, who are very pleased with the provision for their children and cooperate closely with the school. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. However, the Foundation Stage co-ordinator has a heavy load of responsibilities in the Early Years, and the school is looking at ways in which management can be more evenly divided.

What the school should do to improve further

- create a clearer division of management responsibilities, to share ownership and accountability of responsibilities more equally amongst staff
- make more frequent analysis and use of assessment and monitoring data to ensure greater understanding of the challenging targets that are set
- improve the consistency of marking, and pupils' knowledge and understanding of their learning targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average at the end of Year 6, and progress from when pupils enter the school is good. Attainment on entry to the school has varied in the last few years. A majority of pupils start with average skills, but some are above average on entry. Good provision and teaching in the Foundation Stage has ensured good progress for the large majority of children for several years. The increasingly varied attainment of different year groups on entry partially explains the downward trend in attainment at the end of Year 2 in the last three years. In 2007, for example, in national tests, pupils' results were below average in English, mathematics and science. Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and rapidly improving. It has been patchy in the last three years because the wide range of assessment and monitoring data has not been analysed or used often enough to identify individual progress. However, school assessment data shows that the lower and middle attainers had made satisfactory, and often good, progress in their early years. Higher attainers had not done so well, however. School leaders have addressed this 'dip' with urgency. Clear improvement is apparent, and pupils in Year 2 are well placed to reach significantly higher levels than they did in the last three years. This particularly

includes higher attainers. Their work shows that at least a third of them are already working at levels well above average in writing and mathematics.

Pupils in Years 3 to 5 make brisk progress which accelerates in Year 6, and they reach standards above the national average in English, mathematics and science. This has been a consistent picture for the last five years, and includes especially good attainment by boys in mathematics in 2006 and by girls in English in 2007. Achievement remains good in Key Stage 2. Standards and achievement in music and ICT, which were weak in the past, have rapidly improved. In music, pupils are achieving well, especially in singing, and are reaching good standards throughout the school. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language is good because of the very good support provided for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school because it is a welcoming and supportive environment in which all members of the community feel included. They behave well both in and out of school, and their attendance is above average. Pupils are caring and quick to offer help. They are supportive of those with disabilities or other needs and newly-arrived pupils. Their responses to each other and the responsibility they take for their wider environment and community through, for example, their Eco-school work demonstrate good social, moral and cultural development. The newly-introduced 'social and emotional aspects of learning' programme is helping children to develop the way they reflect on their feelings and their place within the wider world. This is at an early stage, however, and spiritual development is satisfactory.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to develop a healthy lifestyle and are enthusiastic about the wide range of sports and physical activity the school provides. Older pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and make a good contribution to the school community through their fundraising work and as 'buddies' for the younger children. They take these responsibilities very seriously and their efforts, for example the sports coaching programme the Year 6 boys and girls provide for Year 1, make a significant contribution to the caring and secure ethos within the school. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that adults are available to listen to them and give support. The school council is an influential body and is rightly proud of the changes it has helped to bring about, for example improving the quality of the vegetarian option at lunchtime. The opportunities provided to develop skills of both independence and collaboration, along with their above average achievement in basic skills and the direct teaching they receive in this area, give pupils a good foundation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, despite the recent downward trend in results in Years 1 and 2. Evidence from the inspection shows that most pupils in these years are now working above the expected levels, having made good progress from their starting points. Pupils who did less well in Years 1 and 2 are being effectively supported by additional teaching programmes and are beginning to make faster progress. Throughout the school, teaching is very often good, although some areas of inconsistency remain. Lessons are carefully planned and usually include work matched to pupils' differing abilities, but teachers do not use their assessments to plan

for children's progress as well in some subjects as they do in English and mathematics. In all subjects, data and monitoring information is not checked often enough to help teachers address pupils' needs quickly.

When pupils are given interesting and challenging tasks, they respond with enthusiastic attention and are eager to learn. This was especially evident when pupils in Year 6 were seen calculating the VAT rate on a variety of everyday items. Similar problem-solving work in other classes make a good contribution to pupils' economic well-being. In some lessons, pupils are beginning to develop the skills of self-assessment and are increasingly willing to work independently and to support each other. When the teaching strategies used do not encourage active participation, pupils do not work as effectively as they should. Marking sometimes gives good guidance on how to improve but this is not consistent across the school. Pupils who speak English as an additional language learn well, because of the good support they receive. The effective provision for the needs of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that they too make good progress in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, interesting and enjoyable curriculum, with strengths in physical education and sports provision, and in the greatly improved provision for music. Children in the Foundation Stage benefit from a well-planned curriculum, which provides independent and adult-led activities according to the needs of the children. Throughout the school, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' numeracy and literacy skills, especially in writing and speaking. Pupils develop considerable enthusiasm through the curriculum for art, singing and drama. Provision for extra-curricular activities is also a strength, through such activities as Asian dance and a wide range of competitive sports. The school promotes Eco-school awareness strongly, and many pupils enjoy the 'Little Rotters' composting club, and make numerous suggestions as to how the school environment can be improved.

The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection in music and ICT have been addressed very successfully. Resources and teaching provision have been improved considerably in both subjects and as a result, standards and achievement have risen markedly. The management of much of the curriculum is through three phase teams. Although the outcomes are good, because of good teaching, the school realises that more responsibility for individual subjects would be better delegated amongst individual staff members.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a high level of care and pastoral support. Many parents and pupils comment favourably on the good level of care given by staff. This greatly helps pupils to be involved and enjoy their life in school, and feel safe and well protected. The needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable, are well evaluated, and they receive good support in trying to do their best. The school has good partnerships with outside agencies and the local community. A strength of the school is its inclusiveness, and its provision of equal opportunities for all pupils.

Academic support and guidance is satisfactory. The school has put into place good systems for assessment and monitoring the progress of all pupils, and is encouraging the creation of learning targets for all pupils. The use of them is, however, inconsistent across the school. Accurate data on progress is available, but is not always analysed swiftly, or often enough, to spot when

pupils are not making expected progress. Not all pupils are aware of their learning targets, although some, as in Year 6, know them very well. Effective marking of work is not consistent. Pupils often receive praise, but less frequently receive guidance on improvement. Some teachers do this verbally, especially with younger pupils, and this is helpful.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of the leadership and management of the school is good. This is because the headteacher gives a very strong focus to the staff on the need to raise standards and achievement, and maintain them at the high levels of recent years. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior management team, who share with him this common purpose. They also strongly and successfully promote the good personal development and well-being of learners. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, especially within teaching and learning. Pupils come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and the inclusion of all learners in a happy and calm ethos is a significant strength. The leadership and management of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are of a good quality.

The school has reorganised its management structure into curriculum teams, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, the balance of responsibility amongst leaders is not evenly distributed. There are appropriate plans to address this. Likewise, the school has started to improve the use of data on pupils' progress to help them meet the increasingly demanding targets that are set. Resources in the school are good and used well, and include a considerable improvement in ICT provision. Although there is a budget deficit, this is rapidly diminishing and financial resources are used well. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively and make a good contribution to the development of learners. There are strong links with cooperative parents and outside agencies, helping to promote good community cohesion. The school governors, some of whom are new, are very supportive of the school and make a satisfactory contribution to its management.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. Although leaders have a good knowledge of what is happening in the school, they tend to rely too much on outside observers to make judgements on the impact of what they are doing.

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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?	2
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	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?	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?	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	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	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Highcliffe Primary School and Community Centre, Birstall, LE4 3DL The inspection team would like to thank you so much for making us very welcome to your school recently. We really enjoyed hearing you tell us how much you like school, especially your sport, swimming pool, art and singing. Your work showed that you are reaching good standards and making good progress. We also loved hearing about your Eco-school work, especially the 'Little Rotters' club. We thought you got on very well together and that you are well looked after by all of the staff. We think you are in a good school with good teachers and assistants. We were also very pleased to hear that your parents and local people are proud of it, and think that all of you do well in your learning.

In the last two years, your school has done really well in increasing the opportunities to improve your music and ICT skills. You now have really good ICT equipment which you enjoy using and which has helped you improve your skills. Your singing and skills at playing musical instruments have also improved. Your teachers now have a lot more information about how you are learning and can use this to help you improve. We are asking your teachers to use this information more often, so that you can move quickly to reach the high targets you are being set. We would also like them to explain to all of you what your targets are, so that you know what you have to do to improve. Although we think that the school is well led and managed, especially by your headteacher, we think that more teachers can help with this. We think a few teachers have too many jobs to do. Perhaps you can also tell them more often how good you think the school is, which will help them when they judge how well the school is doing.

Keep up your good attendance, and keep doing your best in your work. Good luck in your two Christmas shows. We wish we were there to see them!

Best wishes,

Rod Braithwaite Lead Inspector

Annex B



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Lead Inspector