

Houghton-on-the-Hill Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120136
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	313527
Inspection date	5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Smith
Headteacher	A Lee
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Main Street Houghton-on-the-Hill Leicester LE7 9GD
Telephone number	01162 412465
Fax number	01162 412465

Age group	4-10
Inspection date	5 March 2008
Inspection number	313527

© Crown copyright 2008

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. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievements and their learning, the quality of provision, and the impact of the leadership and management on raising standards and improving pupils' achievements. The inspector gathered evidence from discussions with staff, pupils and a governor representative, from sampling lessons and pupils' work and the school's assessments of pupils' progress. The inspector did not inspect other aspects of the school's work in detail but found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included in the report.

Description of the school

Children enter this average-sized primary school with attainment above the expectations for four-year-olds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average, as is the number of pupils entitled to a free school meal.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Houghton-on-the-Hill provides its pupils with a good standard of education and a high level of care, where pupils of all abilities flourish and grow in confidence. The comment of one parent summed up the views held by many that, 'nothing is too much trouble, the headteacher and staff are very approachable and show interest, care and concern for the children as individuals.' Pupils echo this view. They say that staff make them feel special. They especially like the way that staff listen to them and value their efforts. These features help to build strong and positive relationships and spur the pupils on to work hard and to try their best. Pupils who struggle with their work or require specific resources to access the curriculum receive a high level of care. Timely and sensitive help from teachers and learning support assistants mean that these pupils are fully engaged in lessons and make good progress towards the targets set for them. All pupils have targets to help them improve their work. The pupils say they find them very helpful because they challenge them to think hard and improve their work. This is a key reason why pupils achieve as well as they do.

From their starting point, pupils make good progress and reach standards that are well above those expected by the end of Year 5. Their well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology provide pupils with a firm foundation for the future. Teachers devote careful attention to meeting pupils' differing needs. Activities stimulate pupils' interests and help to make learning exciting. This was the case when some Year 5 pupils were comparing the effectiveness of different washing powders. Their attention to the task was high and their investigation thorough because they found the challenge and content of the lesson so fascinating. Good teaching in lessons such as this and throughout the school enables pupils to explore and test out their ideas and to learn from doing things for themselves. Teachers regularly encourage pupils to explain, for example, the strategies they use to solve problems. This enables teachers to check pupils' understanding and to plan effectively for the next steps in learning. By doing this, teachers keep up a good rate of learning in lessons and enable pupils to make good progress.

Increasing pupils' progress in writing has been a focus area for the school. Strategies have included a themed approach to planning the curriculum in order to motivate pupils and generate exciting writing opportunities across subjects. Pupils said they thoroughly enjoyed these activities. Their faces lit up as they talked animatedly about the 'Pirate Theme'. They said it made writing activities more interesting and they felt rather disappointed that this type of work had not continued. Although pupils apply themselves well, by not using this proven strategy well enough, the school is missing the opportunity to enhance the good curriculum and to develop further pupils' writing skills. Teachers provide some good opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects. These include recording the findings of their science investigations and writing accounts in history but sometimes, particularly in Years 1 and 2, worksheets restrict pupils' written responses.

The parents' high level of confidence in the school, especially in the headteacher, is totally justified. He and his staff have the best interests of the pupils at heart. With the governors, they have a strong drive to improve pupils' achievements and to ensure that all pupils receive a high level of care. The school's partnership with parents is very strong. Staff keep parents well informed about their children's achievements and offer parents clear advice about how they can help their children to learn at home. These features enable parents to take an active part in their children's learning. Senior leaders, however, acknowledge that the arrangements

for children starting school are not as clear or helpful to parents as they should be. Governors successfully support the school and do a good job of holding senior leaders and staff to account for the school's effectiveness. This keeps all staff focused on the things that matter and supports successfully the school's good capacity to improve. Robust tracking arrangements enable senior leaders to identify quickly any pupils in danger of underachieving. Their prompt action ensures that these pupils receive well-focused support and that their progress gets swiftly back on track.

The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' awareness of how to lead healthy lives and keep safe. Pupils make very good choices about their diet and take regular exercise because they understand fully how this will help them to grow up fit and strong. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. This establishes a calm working environment and helps to develop strong friendships. Pupils say that one of the best things about their school is that everyone is friendly and happy. This makes them want to come to school even when they feel poorly! Their very good attendance shows just how much they like their school. Pupils respond very well to the school rules and show a high level of care for themselves and others. Their ability to listen to others and accept their views reflects the way adults instil in pupils a respect for values and beliefs different to their own. Pupils are very keen to raise charitable funds; as one pupil commented, 'We want to help others less fortunate than we are.' The school council works hard on behalf of all pupils to make their school a better place to be. They are very pleased that their efforts resulted in an additional hard surface playing area to support sports activities and give pupils more space to play safely.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage classes is good. Children find activities exciting and they are eager to explore and investigate things for themselves. They are confident to ask adults for help and persevere with tasks because they find them interesting. Teachers make careful assessments of children's achievements and plan work that meets the differing needs of children successfully. This enables the children to make good progress. Many opportunities for children to engage in imaginative play help the children to grasp the importance of writing. For example, children answered the phone in the 'hospital' and made appointments and notes of their patients' ailments. Children are eager to record their ideas and they develop a secure understanding of letter sounds to support the early stages of learning to read. Although the school provides a useful meeting for parents prior to their children starting in the Foundation Stage, other information the school provides does not give parents enough detail about the school's induction arrangements. This means that parents are not always aware or able to take full benefit of the staged introduction the school offers, which could help their child settle more quickly into their new environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that writing activities engage and motivate pupils more effectively and that they provide better opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 1 to develop their writing skills across subjects.
- Ensure that arrangements for introducing children into the Foundation Stage are formalised and made more accessible to parents prior to their children starting school.

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	1
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	1
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	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	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

6 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Houghton-on-the-Hill Primary School, Leicester LE7 9GD

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your good school recently. It was a pleasure to meet you and talk with you about all the exciting things you do.

Your teachers and the people in charge do a good job. This helps you to reach standards that are well above those expected by Year 5 and to make good progress in your work.

Here are some of things I thought were particularly good about your school.

- You have a very good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. You make sensible choices about what you eat and take plenty of exercise.
- You are extremely good at looking out for yourselves and others. This is because you are kind and know how to act safely and sensibly.
- You behave exceptionally well and are friendly and polite because you know how important it is to respect the views and beliefs of others.
- You really like school and you never want to miss a day, even when you feel poorly, although it is a good idea to keep your sniffs and sneezes at home!
- You show kindness to those less fortunate than you are and your school council works hard on your behalf. This helps to make your school a better place to be.
- You are very well cared for and this in turn makes you feel safe and secure in school.

I have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on two things:

- to make sure that writing activities are exciting and capture your interest and that they enable you to use your very good writing skills in the different subjects of the curriculum
- to make sure they provide better information for parents about how to help their children make a good start to school.

You can all help by keeping up the good work!

Yours faithfully

Fran Gillam Lead Inspector

Annex B

6 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Houghton-on-the-Hill Primary School, Leicester LE7 9GD

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your good school recently. It was a pleasure to meet you and talk with you about all the exciting things you do.

Your teachers and the people in charge do a good job. This helps you to reach standards that are well above those expected by Year 5 and to make good progress in your work.

Here are some of things I thought were particularly good about your school.

- You have a very good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. You make sensible choices about what you eat and take plenty of exercise.
- You are extremely good at looking out for yourselves and others. This is because you are kind and know how to act safely and sensibly.
- You behave exceptionally well and are friendly and polite because you know how important it is to respect the views and beliefs of others.
- You really like school and you never want to miss a day, even when you feel poorly, although it is a good idea to keep your sniffs and sneezes at home!
- You show kindness to those less fortunate than you are and your school council works hard on your behalf. This helps to make your school a better place to be.
- You are very well cared for and this in turn makes you feel safe and secure in school.

I have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on two things:

- to make sure that writing activities are exciting and capture your interest and that they enable you to use your very good writing skills in the different subjects of the curriculum
- to make sure they provide better information for parents about how to help their children make a good start to school.

You can all help by keeping up the good work!

Yours faithfully

Fran Gillam
Lead Inspector