

Huntingtower Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120377
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313595
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Gillian Smith

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	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Diane Coleman
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Lane
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Huntingtower Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7AU
Telephone number	01476 564291
Fax number	01476 400102

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Huntingtower Community Primary School is larger than average. The proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with learning difficulties are below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is now average. The number of such pupils has increased over the past few years and significantly so from September 2006. Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is broadly in line with standards expected for four year olds, although children's communication skills are considerably less developed than other areas. There has been considerable staff turbulence over the last three years with many staff taking periods of statutory parental leave. The headteacher is absent due to illness. The deputy headteacher officially took over as acting headteacher one week before the inspection. The local authority has provided intensive support for the school since July 2007.

The school has the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to how effectively the leadership is setting a clear direction for improvement, especially the pursuit of higher standards, ensuring consistency of practice and improving the achievement of all pupils throughout the school.

Although the school's view of itself, as identified in its self-evaluation, is that it is satisfactory, inspectors found it to be inadequate. While the school provides an acceptable standard of education, its value for money is inadequate. Improvement since the previous inspection has been slow and several important systems necessary to move the school forward are not yet in place. Leadership and management of the school are, therefore, inadequate.

The school has experienced a period of significant change in its staffing which has not been managed well and further staff leave is planned to take place shortly. This has led to inconsistency in practice across the school. Until very recently, there has not been a strong enough focus on raising the standard of pupils' work and improving their achievement. Leadership has been weak. Individual staff have tried very hard to work out how to assess their pupils, keep a check on progress and improve the school but without adequate systems to support them. Largely, the school and its pupils have 'got by', despite the lack of guidance. However, in 2007 standards in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science dipped to below average and their progress was inadequate.

Evidence from pupils' work and lessons indicates that the progress of most of the current groups of pupils is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. The current Year 6 group has been less affected by staff changes. The school has coped adequately with the recent arrival of pupils for whom English is an additional language and these pupils make satisfactory progress.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory; they usually behave sensibly and their attendance is average. They make a sound contribution to the life of the school and the local community. Pupils' personal qualities and basic skills equip them adequately for the next stage of their education. The curriculum is satisfactory, although there are missed opportunities to support pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There is an adequate range of enrichment activities, particularly with regard to sport. The pastoral support for individual pupils is good. Pupils' enjoyment of school is satisfactory. They feel safe, secure and happy and develop healthy lifestyles well. The pupils who have English as an additional language are warmly welcomed.

The teaching seen in lessons was satisfactory. Teachers plan these carefully and deploy support staff effectively. However, lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge, especially for more able pupils in the mixed age classes. This is partly because the expectations of some teachers are too low and their assessment of pupils' work is not sufficiently accurate. Pupils are not always given enough guidance on how to improve their work. In addition, the school's own achievement data has been unreliable because of a lack of an established tracking system. This has made it difficult for teachers to monitor pupils' progress and identify those that need additional support or challenge.

Positive steps are being taken, and systems are developing to support consistent practice throughout the school. The local authority and the new acting headteacher are energetically

introducing the measures necessary to bring about improvement. However, the school has not demonstrated sufficiently the capacity to improve and many of the initiatives are too new to have a full impact. While the local authority is supporting the leadership team and helping to develop their skills, there is considerable work to do. Their recent self-evaluation is precise, though, and they share a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are now sharply focused on pupils' learning and their progress. Priorities in the revised school development plan are right for the school and clearly support an emphasis on raising standards and achievement, although the work of subject leaders remains under-developed in this respect. Assessment systems are being strengthened and steps are beginning to be taken to improve the accuracy with which teachers identify the National Curriculum level at which pupils are working. However, some of the teachers' marking remains over-generous.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Strong support from local authority personnel over the past year has helped to improve teaching in the Foundation Stage. Adults have a clear understanding of how young children learn and they provide a curriculum that is appropriately broad and balanced; this helps children to make satisfactory progress during their Reception year. There is a clear and effective focus on developing their early language and literacy skills. The teaching seen during the inspection was good. However, these improvements occurred too late in the last school year to influence the children's overall achievement, which remained satisfactory. Support staff make a valuable contribution, encouraging and supporting children in their learning. Children who speak English as an additional language receive good support and their progress is similar to everyone else. All children behave well and enjoy their time at school. On-going assessment is used effectively and adults have successfully struck a balance between encouraging children to choose activities for themselves and providing low-key care and support whenever it is needed. Good use is made of the outdoor area although the lack of a weatherproof cover restricts the extent to which it can be used in inclement weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish leadership that provides clear educational direction that is sharply focused on raising standards and achievement.
- Improve the accuracy of assessment and ensure that it is used effectively to track progress and identify underachievement with greater precision.
- Raise teachers' expectations so that pupils of all abilities, especially the more able, can make the progress of which they are capable.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Over the past few years, pupils have typically made satisfactory progress and reached average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. Work seen during the inspection indicates that this will also be the case for 2008. There was, however, a dip in 2007 and the most recent provisional results indicate that standards in Year 6 were below average in English, mathematics and science. Although this group of pupils made satisfactory progress in reading as they moved through the key stage, progress made in writing, mathematics and science was too slow and too few pupils attained the higher levels. This reflects the impact of weaknesses in the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and the numerous changes of staff this group had.

Work seen during the inspection, in lessons and from pupils' workbooks at the end of Key Stage 2, indicates that standards are currently in line with expectations and that Year 6 pupils are on track to reach expected levels. This group have had fewer staff changes. However, there are variable rates of progress across year groups, especially for higher attaining pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, as do those with learning difficulties.

The school met its relatively undemanding 2007 targets for English and for the higher level in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have a sound enjoyment of school and behave satisfactorily. They are usually cooperative and sensible during lessons, although they sometimes lose concentration when the work set does not match their abilities. A small number of pupils can be inappropriately informal to adults. Pupils are well aware of how to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle and many take part in the additional sporting activities. They make a sound contribution to school life, voice opinions through the suggestion box and initiate change through the school and class councils. They are developing a satisfactory range of skills that will prepare them soundly for the next stage of their education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. While the school has close links with the Jehovah's Witness community, pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own is not as well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The teaching seen during the inspection, and the way pupils learn as a result, were satisfactory. There are pockets of good practice in the Foundation Stage. Teachers prepare their lessons well and clearly express what they want pupils to learn. Computers are used well to support learning, something which pupils find particularly enjoyable. Relationships are good and support staff make a valuable contribution. Their input helps to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and those with English as an additional language achieve soundly, as do the other pupils.

While some teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils, and what they can and cannot do, this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils and supports their sound personal development as well as their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Whilst there are some good examples of ICT being used well across the curriculum, there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. Enrichment is satisfactory. The school runs an adequate number of after school clubs that are well attended; these tend to be of a sporting nature with plans to expand a variety of other activities. There are sound links with other schools and Year

6 pupils undertake a residential visit to an outdoor activity centre. Good attention is given to helping pupils gain an understanding of how to lead fit and healthy lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of pastoral care is good and supports pupils' personal development well. Effective procedures for health and safety, child protection and safe staff recruitment are all in place. Parents are confident that the school looks after their children well and inspectors support their views. Links with external agencies are close and vulnerable pupils are supported particularly well. Recently introduced systems to monitor progress and achievement are improving provision but they are very new to staff and have not yet had an impact; this reduces teachers' ability to identify and support those who need it.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school has been through a period of considerable instability. Until very recently, there has not been a clear view on what the school needed to do to improve and few significant priorities were identified in school improvement planning. This has severely affected the rate at which the school has been able to move forward. Consultation and communication have been weak; staff have not always been consulted about major decisions. Insufficient priority was given to raising standards and achievement and monitoring systems were not rigorous enough.

Following the recent appointment of an acting headteacher, the school has started to move in the right direction. There is now an emphasis on raising standards and the local authority is providing strong support. Rapid work is occurring to develop the skills of the senior team and subject leaders. These are staff who are enthusiastic, willing and able, and who have increased the range of their work since the last inspection. However, they have had little opportunity to develop fully their monitoring and evaluation role. A programme is now in place to support these aspects of their work. Further staff changes are on the horizon, however, and the acting headteacher still has a part time teaching commitment which is restricting the time she can devote to the leadership role. In addition, whole school targets, as at the time of the last inspection are not being set high enough to inspire and raise achievement.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors work hard to ensure that all statutory requirements are met. Recent re-structuring by the chair of governors has given the governing body a better understanding of the performance of the school and how the school must be held to account. Governors now play a greater part in decision-making.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Huntingtower Community Primary School, Huntingtower Road, Grantham,
Lincolnshire NG31 7AU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. We are pleased that you like coming to school and that you know so much about how to keep yourselves safe and healthy. We enjoyed our visit and want to share with you some of the things we found out about your school. Although your school is improving because of the commitment and hard work of Miss Harkins and all the other staff, it is not as good as it should be. I am recommending that it gets some extra help because it needs to make some important improvements if it is to give you a better education.

Here are some of the things we have suggested to help your school improve:

- make sure that everyone is thinking very clearly about how changes made at the school will raise the standard of your work and help you to make more rapid progress
- your teachers need to find out accurately what you know and understand so that they can follow your progress and spot those who are not doing as well as they should
- your teachers need to provide more difficult work, especially for those of you who find learning easy, so that you can make faster progress.

I am sure you will do all you can to help your teachers improve your school. We wish you all the best for the future.

Gillian Smith

Lead Inspector