

Helpringham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120379
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313596
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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	133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoff Hotchkin
Headteacher	Mrs Penny Wetton
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2005
School address	Highgate Helpringham Sleaford Lincolnshire NG34 0RD
Telephone number	01529421676
Fax number	01529421676

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average size primary school takes pupils from Helpringham and surrounding villages near Sleaford. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion currently eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. A small number of pupils are from Traveller communities and therefore attend the school for only part of the year. The school holds an ActiveMark Gold award and has Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and satisfactory value for money. While these are the same overall judgements as the previous inspection, the school has continued to move forward since then and is improving. There are now several good areas and the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Parents are almost unanimously satisfied and as one notes, her children 'have thrived academically, socially and in sport and are confident, happy and secure children'.

Pupils enter the school with a range of early experiences and skills which overall are typical for this age. In the Foundation Stage, pupils make satisfactory overall progress and when they enter Year 1, most meet the expectations for their age. They make at least satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 and 4 pupils also make satisfactory progress and in Years 5 and 6 pupils make good progress. Year 6 standards in 2007 were average overall. However, recently standards have varied from year to year in both Key Stages. Whilst pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve at least satisfactorily this is not yet as consistent as it should be, particularly for those of higher ability.

The personal development of pupils is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy physical activity including energetic playtimes and after school sports. The school does much to promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle but there is more to do to persuade pupils of the benefits of healthy packed lunches. Pupils' behaviour is good and they are aware of how this affects the safety of others. They enjoy taking on responsibilities around the school, including as 'buddies' when they help and reassure other children in times of need. Such activities help them grow in confidence, which prepares them well for their future.

The quality of teaching and learning and of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. There are examples of strong teaching in Years 5 and 6. Here staff have high expectations of pupils and set challenging work for the more able pupils. However, in other lessons staff miss opportunities to challenge pupils even further and use textbooks or work sheets, which do little to interest them. This affects the standards reached particularly by higher attaining pupils.

The care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory overall and the pastoral care of the pupils is good. Relationships are warm and supportive. Staff know the pupils well and quickly recognise when they may need additional care or help. However, while staff make satisfactory use of the information from checking progress, this could at times be used more effectively to ensure all groups of pupils are consistently challenged.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher leads the staff team well and ensures there is a continuing focus on school improvement. The role of subject leaders has recently changed and is now shared by pairs of teachers. This is beginning to focus well on the monitoring of the work of the school. Governance is broadly satisfactory although not all experienced governors have a good enough grasp of standards and overall provision.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Reception class having often attended the pre-reception group within the school, which is now available from the age of three. When they start, their skills are wide ranging but generally in line with expectations. Most are enthusiastic about beginning school, settle well to routines and grow in confidence. They make at least satisfactory overall progress

in all areas of their learning because teaching and learning are satisfactory and with some good features. However, at times staff miss opportunities to use and model key vocabulary. Staff know and care for the children well, which ensures they work and play in a safe and secure environment where their efforts are valued. The curriculum is interesting and with a good emphasis on using the new outdoor areas. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and staff in the Reception class liaise well with both the pre-reception group and with those who teach the older pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all groups of pupils and particularly those of higher ability make consistently good progress.
- Make the fullest use of assessment information to provide teaching that is consistently challenging.
- Ensure all governors have a good grasp of available information to help lead the school forward.

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

Children enter Key Stage 1 having achieved the expectations for their age in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2, they make satisfactory overall progress and sometimes this is good. National tests and assessments at the age of seven show that whilst attainment has dipped in the last two years standards are broadly average. However, this is not consistent from year to year, and in 2007, considerably more pupils reached both the average and the higher levels in mathematics than they did in reading. Across Key Stage 2, pupils also make satisfactory overall progress although again this is variable. This is best in Years 5 and 6 where they make good progress. National tests and inspection judgements show that standards at the age of eleven are in line with national averages. This indicates a marked improvement in the proportion of eleven year olds attaining standards above the national average in mathematics. As they move through the school the majority of pupils, including those with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. However, this is not yet consistent enough including for higher attaining pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the pupils is good. This is a happy school where there are good relationships and the large majority of pupils behave well. Where there is any misbehaviour, staff make clear what is acceptable or not. Good behaviour is rewarded, including the use of stickers and certificates, which are much valued by the younger children. Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe including during very active and friendly playtimes. They enjoy the good range of after-school activities, particularly sports, which many of the older ones attend enthusiastically. However, there is more to do to promote healthy packed lunches. Many also enjoy taking on responsibility within the school. They take part in fundraising activities and like being part of the school and village community all of which helps them prepare well for their future. Attendance is largely average overall and the school monitors this well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and there are several good aspects. Parents are pleased with the quality of teaching for the oldest pupils, which they rightly describe as 'enthusiastic and dynamic'. All staff manage pupils well which ensures lessons are conducted in a calm and purposeful manner. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and a growing proportion is good which is having a positive impact on learning. Pupils have targets for what they need to do to improve; these are well displayed in class and referred to by the pupils. However, while staff plan linked activities for those of different abilities, particularly in literacy and numeracy, the level of challenge could be higher in some work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactorily based on national guidance and covers all the appropriate areas. There are particular strengths in many after school activities, which enrich the curriculum well. French has recently been introduced in Key Stage 1. Another recent initiative, the ELSA activities (Enrich Life Skills Afternoon) focuses on a range of aspects including First Aid, road safety and healthy eating, supporting pupils' personal development well. The school has recently developed a topic-based curriculum, which links different subjects and provides greater depth to some of the areas covered. Planning for the mixed-age classes is agreed in close consultation with other staff. This ensures equality of opportunity. There is also careful planning to provide additional activities for targeted groups of pupils, which is beginning to have an impact on raising standards. However, the frequent use of workbooks and work sheets does little to motivate pupils and affects their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

While the care, guidance and support of pupils is satisfactory overall, pastoral care is good and has a particular impact on their personal development. The school judges this to be good, but the quality of academic guidance makes it no more than satisfactory overall. The school takes seriously its responsibilities to keep the pupils safe and secure. All adults, including support staff who are a valued part of the school team, know and care for the pupils well; so they feel confident there is always someone to talk to. The school works well with other schools and a variety of external agencies including those that support families from Traveller communities. Child protection procedures and the checks of those who help in school are secure. There are well-established practices to support health and safety although risk assessments could be more specific to the area covered. The school has gradually refined and improved assessment routines and there is an effective system of summarising the progress made in literacy and numeracy. However, such checks are not as regular as sometimes seen and therefore data is not readily available to help guide areas for further improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school is satisfactory overall and with several strengths. The headteacher and staff team are a close-knit group who work with commitment to ensure everyone recognises the long-term vision for school improvement. The headteacher has purposefully pursued key goals through a difficult period for the school. With the full support of virtually the whole of the school community, staff, parents and pupils are now beginning to see the rewards of years of dedicated work. Teachers have recently begun to work in pairs to coordinate provision in key areas. They have begun a programme of joint monitoring of planning, teaching and of pupils' work. School self-evaluation is honest and mainly accurate, recognising both the strengths and areas for further improvement. Governance is broadly satisfactory. However, some influential governors do not have a good enough grasp of standards and the range of available information to play an effective role in on-going improvements.

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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	3
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	3
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

4 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Helpringham Primary school, Sleaford, Lincolnshire. NG34 0RD

Thank you very much for looking after me when I visited your school. I really enjoyed chatting to you in lessons, at lunchtime and when I spoke to the school council. Your school is continuing to improve.

These are some of the best things about your school.

- Everyone seems to enjoy coming to school because it feels like being part of a large and happy family.
- Staff know and look after you all in a caring manner.
- You behave well and understand how to keep yourself and your friends safe.
- The teaching of the oldest pupils is good and ensures they make lots of progress.
- All the staff work enthusiastically together to ensure the school continues to develop.

This is what is to be improved.

- Some of you, and especially those who are capable of doing harder work, could make a bit more progress.
- Staff could use what they find out from checking your work to make sure other tasks are a bit harder.
- Governors could make sure they know and understand all the information available to them to help the staff plan for the future.

To help your school even more, you could make sure that you try hard all the time. Please remember to eat healthily! I would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Hall

Lead inspector