

Heacham Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120874
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313775
Inspection date	8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Dale
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Belfield
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	School Road Heacham King's Lynn Norfolk PE31 7DQ
Telephone number	01485 570357
Fax number	01485 570357

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether all pupils achieve as well as they can in writing and mathematics, whether teachers use assessments effectively, the impact of academic guidance on achievement and standards and the impact of leadership and management since the last inspection. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff and governor representatives. In addition, there was observation of parts of several lessons, scrutiny of school information and its self-evaluation statement, analysis of samples of pupils' work, evaluation of parents' questionnaires, and discussions with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. Where appropriate, these have been included in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school serving the large seaside village of Heacham. The school was subject to reorganisation in 2004 from a Nursery and First school to a Nursery and Infant school. The number claiming free school meals is below national average. Virtually all pupils are White British and English is their first language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than in most schools but the number with a statement of special educational need is higher. The school 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: 2

This is a good school. Some features are outstanding. Children enter this small school with a broad range of levels of knowledge and understanding, though they are often below those expected for their age in their communication and independence skills. They make good progress from their various starting points and often attain above average standards by the time they leave. Arrangements to ensure children are appropriately supported and progress well in the Foundation Stage are also good.

The school's success arises from the clear vision and direction given by the headteacher to a caring and committed staff. Everyone works as a team, in partnership with governors and parents, to achieve a secure, happy and stimulating learning environment. The positive ethos and family atmosphere are evident on entering the school, which is a focal point for its local community. The school environment is nurturing yet challenging, so children become well-rounded individuals. As a result, children not only achieve well academically but many of their personal achievements are exceptional. It is not surprising that parents are highly appreciative of the school. One wrote: 'Heacham Infant School is a lovely school, both my daughters have been really happy here. The teachers and staff always make you feel welcome if you have any concerns or questions. I have always felt really well involved in my daughters' schooling, and they really love going to school every day.' This comment represents the views of many who responded to the questionnaire. Children echo this sentiment. When asked what might make the school even better one said: 'Nothing, because the school is already the best!' This high level of enjoyment is reflected in their good attendance, which has improved remarkably from previous low levels.

Children's personal development, including their social, moral and spiritual development, is outstanding. Their cultural development is good. Behaviour is exemplary, so not a moment is lost maintaining discipline. Children are encouraged to express their opinions and to accept responsibilities as often as possible, allowing them to grow in confidence, often beyond their years. They take pride in helping others and in looking after each other, their school and the environment beyond. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy, love to be active and have a remarkable understanding of how to keep themselves and each other safe. The combination of good literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) skills and highly developed personal skills equips children well for the next stage of education and life. The outstanding care and guidance offered is central to the school's ethos and includes systems for ensuring the high levels of health, safety and welfare of children and safeguarding procedures that comply with requirements. Children say they feel safe and are confident that there is always someone to help them with any problems. Adults go the extra mile to make sure that everyone is included in everything that the school has to offer.

Teaching is good and is able to inspire children as a result of the enthusiastically delivered and carefully planned lessons containing lots of practical, hands on activities to engage them. Relationships are positive and children are keen to work hard. Those who find learning more difficult get good support, both individually and in groups from able teaching assistants, so these children achieve well.

Systems to provide academic guidance are much improved and based on regular and rigorous checks of assessments in English and mathematics and learning targets that are often reinforced daily on an individual basis to help children to improve. Despite these recent improvements,

however, school leaders acknowledge that not all teachers consistently use these assessments to challenge the most able children to achieve the highest levels in mathematics and writing to the extent that they do in reading. The good curriculum has focused well on ensuring the development of children's important basic skills, including ICT. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to ensuring children attain high standards in creative subjects including art, design and technology. A carefully thought out programme of personal, social and health education successfully helps to encourage children's outstanding personal development. Children enjoy an impressive range of activities that go beyond the required subjects in lunchtime and after-school clubs. A new and creative approach to delivering the curriculum has been established which involves subjects being taught almost completely through topic themes that really bring learning alive and make it memorable for children. They now have many opportunities to practise their basic skills in other subjects and take great pride in the presentation of their work. For example, a topic using the local lighthouse involved science, literacy and the arts. Themed weeks and days add further interest and enjoyment. One child volunteered that: 'PE day was the best day ever!' The discovery that Pocahontas had links with the area involved the study of history, culture and the arts.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Expectations are high and challenging targets are set and met. Governors offer a good degree of support and challenge to school leaders. Leaders have ensured not only that issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully addressed but also that the school has continued to go from strength to strength, demonstrating a good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children do well in the Foundation Stage. They settle quickly because of the good support and knowledge of staff, which make children feel secure and ready to learn. Children enter the Nursery in small cohorts with very varied levels of skills. Often their communication and independence skills are below those expected for their age. After attending Nursery, they transfer to a Reception or mixed Reception and Year 1 class. In all classes, exciting activities and topic themes are provided and are taught well by teachers and teaching assistants. In the main, these offer an appropriate balance between teacher led and child initiated activities and offer children opportunities to practise what they are learning in different ways. Consequently, when they enter Year 1, most have achieved the levels of knowledge and skills expected and some have surpassed them. School leaders recognise that the different phases of the Foundation Stage could work even more effectively together to ensure even more rigour in systems for assessment and checking on progress and that the quality of the outdoor curriculum offered to Reception children matches the high quality of that which they enjoy in the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage to bring even more rigour to systems for assessment and consistency to the quality of the outdoor curriculum.
- Support the most able children more effectively so that they achieve the highest grades in mathematics and writing.

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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?	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	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?	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	2
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

9 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Heacham Infant and Nursery School, Norfolk, PE31 7DQ.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. This letter is to tell you what I found out.

There are many good things about your school.

- You achieve higher standards and make good progress.
- Your attendance is good, you behave extremely well and work very hard to help others.
- Your knowledge of how to keep yourself healthy and safe is outstanding;
- You enjoy school and the school is good at organising interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are extremely well cared for and looked after.
- Your headteacher, and all of the other people who help run your school, are highly effective at making sure that you get a good education.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school. However, all of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them with this these are the most important things to do next.

- Make sure that everyone who looks after the Nursery and Reception classes work as closely as they can together to check carefully on how well you are doing and that the learning outdoors for Reception children is as good as it is for the Nursery children.
- Make sure that those of you who find your learning easier do as well in writing and mathematics as you already do in reading.

I certainly enjoyed talking with you and finding out all about your school. I particularly enjoyed hearing you sing so nicely in assembly and playing together so nicely at playtimes. Keep on working hard, doing your very best, coming to school every school day and enjoying your time at school.

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector