

Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121899
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314141
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Scheidigger
Headteacher	Sarah Drury
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2004
School address	Wharf Road Higham Ferrers Rushden NN10 8BQ
Telephone number	01933 312904
Fax number	01933 397513

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2007
Inspection number	314141

© Crown copyright 2007

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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Attainment on entry to the Nursery is broadly in line with expectations for children's ages. However, more than half the children leave at the end of the Nursery year. Others then join from a range of pre-school providers, though some have little or no pre-school experience. As a result, attainment on entry to Reception is a little below national expectations. In the school as a whole, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need is below average. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some speak another language at home but nearly all are fluent in English. The headteacher was appointed in September 2004, shortly after the last inspection. The school was without a deputy headteacher for a long period after its last inspection; a deputy headteacher was appointed just over a year ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Pupils enjoy being here and participate well in the activities provided. A sound curriculum ensures they make satisfactory progress and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. Standards in writing tend to be higher, often being above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and mathematics, reaching standards that are in line with national averages by the end of Year 2. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to others. However, able pupils are not set sufficiently challenging targets, particularly in reading and mathematics. Consequently, not enough reach the higher levels in these areas. Children in the Foundation Stage get a good start to their education. They make good progress from their starting points and reach broadly average standards.

Teaching is satisfactory, with some good teaching also being evident. Activities provided for pupils are lively and actively engage them. However, teaching is not always closely enough tailored to all pupils' learning needs, particularly those of the more able in Years 1 and 2. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, are good. Pupils behave well and in a safe manner. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, happily taking on responsibility, for example within the school and their classes. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Because they are well cared for, pupils feel safe at school. However, they are not always sure of how to improve their work. Pupils know all about healthy lifestyles and effectively put into practice what they know. Their satisfactory progress in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) means pupils are satisfactorily prepared for future life.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has taken the school a significant way forward since she took up her post. Key issues from the last inspection have been well tackled so that progress in mathematics, the quality of management and the use of ICT are much improved. With a now-complete senior leadership team, the pace of improvement has accelerated. Incisive and accurate self-evaluation, coupled with good planning, has enabled identified weaknesses to be addressed effectively. This has resulted in improved standards. Teaching has also improved, though it is not consistently good across Years 1 and 2. More recently, work on systems for tracking pupils' progress and using assessment to help improve pupils' learning is beginning to have impact on the school's work. However, marking does not always tell pupils how to do better. Although the roles of subject leaders are developing, they have not been as involved as senior leaders in improving the school. The good recent improvements, especially in assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, show the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most pupils make good progress and transfer to Year 1 with attainment that is broadly in line with national expectations. Much of this is down to well-planned teaching which ensures that most pupils have good access to a wide range of practical activities both in and out of the classroom. The school recognises the scope for more capable pupils to do even better. Good induction procedures and links with parents enable pupils to settle quickly into school routines.

As one parent commented: 'We never saw our son come home as happy and full of life and conversation as he does now'. Good assessment records enable teachers to track progress well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teaching is always closely matched to all pupils' needs and that the more able in particular are fully challenged in Years 1 and 2, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Improve marking so that all pupils know what they have to do to improve their work.
- Ensure that subject leaders are more involved in improving teaching and raising attainment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. It is best in writing, which pupils enjoy. Pupils willingly write at length, using a wide range of vocabulary. However, their problem-solving and calculation skills in mathematics are weaker and this acts as a barrier to better achievement, especially for more able pupils. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 over the last three years indicate sustained improvement in pupils' performance. The school has done well in getting more pupils to reach nationally expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The work on grammar and letter sounds has supported progress in English. A focus on calculation has also helped, although able pupils are still not sufficiently challenged to help them achieve the higher levels in reading and mathematics. Some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make significant progress when well supported. Overall, their progress is similar to that of others. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also perform in line with others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have positive attitudes to school and readily join in the activities available to them. They behave well, get on well with one another and learn to work independently. Many show good initiative in their work. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and, as a result, adopt safe practices and healthy lifestyles. They are pleased with their successes, beaming with pride when these are celebrated in assemblies. Most attend regularly and are punctual. Pupils contribute well to the community by raising money for charities, both locally and further afield. They have good opportunities to develop understanding of citizenship through the school council and contribute to ideas for improving the school and financial decision-making. Pupils have good social skills and are often reflective and thoughtful. However, their understanding of cultural diversity in Britain is not as well developed. By the end of Year 2, pupils are appropriately prepared for their next step in education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and improving. There is some good teaching. Good features include the identification of clear learning intentions that are shared with pupils so they know what they are aiming to achieve and why activities are set. Teachers also highlight for pupils, in simple language, how to assess what they have achieved. Behaviour is managed well and good relationships with pupils ensure they cooperate well with staff. In some lessons, however, the pace of learning is slow and work is not always well matched to individual needs. The quality

of support as pupils undertake their work is variable. Able pupils, in particular, are not challenged enough. In the best lessons, introductory sessions actively engage pupils in their learning, and questioning is good, with teachers choosing who should answer rather than only asking those who volunteer. Pupils' work is regularly marked but not enough use is made of comments to guide pupils on how to improve it.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage curriculum is engaging and well planned. In Years 1 and 2, provision for English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. However, the school is in the process of rolling out a new curriculum with an increased focus on developing skills, such as problem-solving and enquiry, and pupils' creativity. Whilst planning for this is good, it is too early to assess its impact on pupils' learning. The use of ICT has improved since the last inspection and is now sound. The school makes appropriate provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's commitment to promoting healthy eating, exercise and safe living is good, and successfully contributes to pupils' well-being. Pupils benefit from a sound range of visitors and visits to places of interest. These experiences enrich their knowledge of specific subjects. Events such as Theme Weeks are a great success in linking learning in different subjects and add to the richness of the activities provided.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Parents are fulsome in their praise for the care given to their children's well-being and personal development. Their appreciation is epitomised by one who wrote: 'The children seem happy to be at the school and we feel our child is safe within that environment'. The school has worked hard to achieve a culture where parents and pupils are listened to and problems are dealt with as soon as they are raised. Consequently, pupils feel confident that they can turn to an adult if upset or worried. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and for health and safety are robust. Links with outside agencies are good and used well to support pupils with specific needs. There is close liaison with the adjacent junior school, ensuring smooth transition for pupils between the two. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall, reducing the overall quality of care, guidance and support to satisfactory. The quality of feedback and setting targets is inconsistent and an area the school rightly plans to improve further. Current shortcomings result in not all pupils having a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership and clear direction for development. She is well supported by the senior leadership team. Together they have put in place significant improvements over the past year, particularly in relation to the curriculum and systems for assessing pupils' ongoing work. They have also started to extend the roles of subject coordinators so that these have begun to play a more active role in leading their subjects. Most pupils now meet targets that are appropriately challenging. The school is aware of the need to set more challenging targets if it is to improve pupils' attainment further. Governors are beginning to be more actively involved but remain somewhat reliant on the school for information.

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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2
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

22 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School, Rushden NN10 8BQ

You may remember that three inspectors recently visited your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for speaking to us about your work and giving your views on the school. We enjoyed our visit. The school provides you with a sound education and you make satisfactory progress during your time in school. Teaching is satisfactory and you are provided with a sound range of learning opportunities. You are well cared for and looked after but could do with more guidance on how to improve your work. We have listed below some of the good things we found:

- You behave well and enjoy school.
- Children in the Foundation Stage settle in well and get a good start to their education.
- You get on well with each other and make good friends.
- You support the school and local community well and raise funds to help good causes.
- Staff work well as a team and teaching is improving.
- Your headteacher leads the school well.

The school has agreed to focus on the following things to help it improve:

- Making sure that teaching is at the right level for all of you, particularly for those of you who find learning quite easy, so that you do better in reading and mathematics.
- Checking that marking shows all of you what you need to do to improve your work.
- Involving other teachers more in improving individual subjects.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and by asking your teachers how you can make your work even better.

We wish you all well for the future.

Gulshan Kayembe Lead inspector



22 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Higham Ferrers Nursery and Infant School, Rushden NN10 8BQ

You may remember that three inspectors recently visited your school. Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for speaking to us about your work and giving your views on the school. We enjoyed our visit. The school provides you with a sound education and you make satisfactory progress during your time in school. Teaching is satisfactory and you are provided with a sound range of learning opportunities. You are well cared for and looked after but could do with more guidance on how to improve your work. We have listed below some of the good things we found:

- You behave well and enjoy school.
- Children in the Foundation Stage settle in well and get a good start to their education.
- You get on well with each other and make good friends.
- You support the school and local community well and raise funds to help good causes.
- Staff work well as a team and teaching is improving.
- Your headteacher leads the school well.

The school has agreed to focus on the following things to help it improve:

- Making sure that teaching is at the right level for all of you, particularly for those of you who find learning quite easy, so that you do better in reading and mathematics.
- Checking that marking shows all of you what you need to do to improve your work.
- Involving other teachers more in improving individual subjects.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and by asking your teachers how you can make your work even better.

We wish you all well for the future.

Gulshan Kayembe
Lead inspector