

Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121948
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314162
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Marion Wallace

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	548
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Drisc Wardle
Headteacher	Richard Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002
School address	Balmoral Close Towcester NN12 6JA
Telephone number	01327 351466
Fax number	01327 351667

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Nicholas Hawksmoor is a large primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds although there are a small number from other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Children start school in the Nursery with the skills and abilities expected for their age. The School has achieved the Artsmark Gold and the Eco Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Pupils receive a very high quality education in this outstanding school. Overall effectiveness is outstanding. One parent, representing the views of many said, 'An exceptional school where pupils experience a creative approach to learning and delivery of the curriculum, and pupils benefit enormously from the motivation and inspiration of their teachers.' Pupils agree and talk appreciatively and enthusiastically about the many enjoyable and exciting activities they experience during their time at school. The school is a calm learning environment. Pupils appreciate the school; they feel safe and enjoy all it has to offer. Their impressive paintings and sculptures are exquisitely displayed for all to appreciate and share and reflect the quality of work that goes on throughout the school.

This exceptional school is the result of outstanding leadership. There is a vibrant ethos and strong commitment from everyone to provide each pupil with the best possible education. Attention to detail combined with very high expectations and passionate enthusiasm for the arts and sporting activities are central to the work of the whole school. This unique quality reflects the headteacher's enthusiasm for the arts and sports and the underlying conviction that pupils learn best from first-hand experiences. The balance of art, sport and creativity is at the heart of learning and, as parents commented, 'This has enormous benefits for children's self-esteem, well-being and the excellent quality of work produced.' Pupils' personal development is outstanding.

Pupils' achievement is excellent and enables them to reach exceptionally high standards by the time they leave the school. A good balance of excellent teaching and well planned activities ensure children in the Nursery and Reception classes make outstanding gains in all areas of learning, and build very well on their prior attainment. They enter Year 1 with above average standards in all areas of learning. They continue to make excellent progress in Years 1 to 6 and achieve exceptionally high standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Pupils know how to adopt healthy lifestyles because opportunities for activity and health education are excellent. Outstanding academic standards and excellent interpersonal skills prepare pupils extremely well for their future life. The school council encourages pupils to consider how to improve their school and the wider world.

The outstanding teaching and excellent curriculum enable pupils to do very well. Care, guidance and support are exceptional. Extremely high expectations and very good care are evident throughout the school and consequently all pupils feel very well looked after. Gifted and talented pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptional progress and achieve impressive standards in all aspects of their work.

The vast majority of parents appreciate the improved communication between school and home but some parents would like even more opportunities to learn about the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Find different and more effective ways to communicate with parents so they are able to learn more about the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding and they reach exceptionally high standards. Children make excellent progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and enter Year 1 at above average levels. Standards reached at the end of Year 2 are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. High standards are maintained and built upon, and, by the end of Year 6 are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. In 2006 pupils made exceptionally good progress and exceeded the targets set for them. In 2007 results were even better with impressive numbers of pupils reaching the higher levels in all subjects.

High quality work is visible in every class in all subject areas. The standard of performance in art, dance and sporting activities is extremely high. Pupils recently performed an exquisite dance at the Albert Hall. The quality of artwork displayed around the school is outstanding. Pupils reach high standards in music, drama and dance. Sporting achievement is of an equally high standard, reflecting high quality teaching and learning in this subject. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same exceptional progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils grow into mature and responsible young people. They develop appreciation of art, music, drama and dance through learning to create, present and perform their own work to a very high standard. They learn to consider the needs of others and make a significant contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils enjoy devising ways to help those less fortunate than themselves through the many international links, for example, the 'Seeds for Africa'. The school council ensures everyone's views are considered when making decisions. Pupils know and show clearly their awareness of the importance of keeping themselves fit, healthy and safe. They demonstrate self-confidence and relish the opportunity to take responsibility, caring for others or acting as 'Huff and Puff' monitors. Behaviour is impeccable. Pupils really enjoy school and this is reflected in attendance levels which are well above average. As a group of pupils said, 'We love everything about the school.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

In all classes the quality of teaching and learning is consistently high. This is because teachers inspire the pupils and make their work exciting and stimulating. Enjoyment is the key to success in this school. Pupils learn, not because they have to but because they are excited and highly motivated by the work they are given. Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely strong. Pupils are clear about the purpose of every lesson. Expectations of what pupils will achieve are very high and consequently lessons proceed at a brisk pace. Levels of concentration are high and pupils are constantly challenged to produce their best work. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well and pupils are constantly involved in assessing their own work and that of others. Teaching assistants give very effective support to those who need the extra help. Specialist teaching in art and design, music, drama and dance is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school offers an extremely creative and broad curriculum. As a result, pupils develop a calm and appreciative attitude to all they are offered. This creative curriculum also contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. Throughout the school, there is a strong focus on high quality arts provision. This is evident in everyday lessons and also through the excellent and varied range of extra-curricular activities, residential trips and visits. For example, during their recent trip to Paris pupils observed the quality of Monet's work which inspired them to create their own high quality oil paintings on canvas in the Impressionist style. Through a rich curriculum in drama, art, dance, music and physical education pupils successfully learn performance skills. ICT is used very well by teachers to stimulate an interest in learning and develop skills in technology. In the Foundation Stage, children experience a range of imaginative learning activities stimulating them to explore and learn through first-hand experience. As a parent commented, 'The creative aspect with plenty of music, dance and art and a fantastic variety of interesting lessons and activities has really helped the pupils in so many ways.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding level of care shown by everyone in school makes pupils feel safe and secure and contributes significantly to the confidence with which they approach learning. There are excellent arrangements for child protection and safeguarding pupils. These are known to all adults involved with the school. Excellent relationships mean that pupils are confident that they can approach adults with any problems. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support and their individual education plans are well matched to their needs. The excellent pastoral care is enhanced by a strong focus on academic monitoring and guidance. Support for academic guidance is very effective because pupils' progress is checked rigorously. Pupils contribute to identifying their own targets through individual sessions with their class teacher. They confidently know what they need to do to improve their work because this is reinforced through excellent marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior team provide extremely effective and clear educational direction for the school. All staff share the headteacher's vision that a rich experience of high quality art and sporting activities has benefits for personal and academic development. The school's success is the result of highly effective leadership and management at all levels. All aspects of the school's work are monitored carefully, resulting in an excellent understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be improved. The governing body carries out its responsibilities very well. The chair is very experienced and has a long-term relationship with the school. The governors challenge rigorously and support enthusiastically. The school has a strong track record of continual improvement. Parents and pupils agree, 'The school is extremely well led.' The excellent progress that the school has made since the last inspection shows its outstanding capacity to improve even further. The headteacher's motto of 'Onwards and Upwards' is referred to by all staff. It indicates the continual effort and critical reflection that has helped to produce this remarkable school.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

5 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Nicholas Hawksmoor Primary School, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 6JA

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and would like to thank you for your welcome and the time you spent talking to me. I am sorry that I could not spend more time with all of you. You all appreciate the opportunities you have to experience the many exciting activities and learn through high quality creative arts and sports experiences. I agree with you that Nicholas Hawksmoor is an outstanding school.

- These are the things that I found during my memorable visit to your school.
- You achieve as well as you do because all adults work very hard to make sure that you reach very high standards in all aspects of your school life.
- You all enjoy learning because teaching is excellent. Lessons and activities are challenging and fun.
- Your behaviour is exemplary. You concentrate really well and do your best.
- You gain more and more confidence as you progress through the school but you are also sensitive to the needs of others, constantly planning ways to help those who need extra help in your school and the wider world.
- The school gives you a wonderful opportunity to learn about art and sport through the many visits such as the recent trip to Paris to look at Monet's paintings. You told me about your exciting concerts and productions.
- Your school cares very much about you and teaches you to keep safe, be healthy and care for others. Your school council is doing a first class job making sure that you all get a say in how to improve your school grounds.
- Your headteacher and all the staff work really well together to make sure that the school is an exciting place and they constantly try hard to make it even better than it is.

I have asked the school to provide even more opportunities to involve your parents. You can all help improve your school even more by contributing your ideas to the development of the garden.

Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit to your school and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Wallace Lead inspector