

Halam CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122761
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	314390
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Brown
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	The Turnpike Halam Newark Nottinghamshire NG22 8AE
Telephone number	01636 813062
Fax number	01636 816708

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than most other primary schools. It serves Halam and Edingley, though over a third of the pupils attend from outside these two villages. Almost all the pupils are of a White British background. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. The school holds the following awards: Investor in People, Intermediate International Schools Award, Healthy School, Eco-School Bronze and Financial Management Standard in Schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Due to the excellence of the care, guidance and support provided, good leadership and management and good teaching, the overall effectiveness of the school is good. The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. A particularly strong emphasis on global education and ecological awareness contributes very well to the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' positive attitudes are reflected both in their pride in the school and their very high levels of attendance. Pupils enjoy learning and they say that lessons are fun and, 'The teachers are up for a laugh and make learning real by having lots of objects for us to work from and not just by talking to us.' Their behaviour is excellent both in lessons and around the school and they show high levels of care and concern for each other.

Parents are almost unanimous in their high regard for the school. Typical of the many positive comments was, 'Both of our children are thriving at school. There is a happy, caring environment in which they feel very secure.' A few parents expressed a concern about the range and depth of the physical education (PE) opportunities. Although, in the past, there have been a few occasions when lessons have been postponed due to unforeseen circumstances, the PE curriculum is rich and varied, fully meets regulations and there is a good range of additional activities for such a small school.

Children enter school with skills and knowledge that broadly match those typically found though their personal and social skills are above those expected. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage and, by the end of Year 6, they have made good progress and have achieved well. Standards in national tests were exceptionally high in 2007 in English and science and current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain equally high standards. Staff are aware that, in the past, achievement in mathematics in the junior classes has been too slow overall and pupils' progress could be quickened, particularly in applying knowledge when problem solving. This has led to a priority to boost progress. The impact of the resulting improvements, which have included giving dedicated time to practical mathematics, is positive. Progress in mathematics has strengthened to the extent that for the current Year 4, 5 and 6 pupils, over this school year it has been stronger than in English.

Teaching is good because teachers have excellent relationships with pupils; they genuinely care for them and are deeply committed to ensuring that all groups make good progress. Planning is good and well matched to pupils' needs, including those that find learning more easy. Pupils who find learning more difficult make good progress because their needs are identified early and they receive tailored support both from their teachers and teaching assistants. The curriculum is of good quality and is well planned to ensure that national requirements are met and that activities build on pupils' interests. However, although the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) is good, the opportunity for pupils to practise and apply skills taught is limited because there are not enough computer resources in the classrooms.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is rightly much admired by the whole school community. She provides strong and clear direction for the work of the school and because all views are sought and valued, teamwork is strong and staff morale high.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage because provision is good. Many parents commented on how quickly their children settle on entry. They are given a good range of interesting activities that match their needs well and there is a good balance provided between activities with their Year 1 classmates that are directed by the teacher, and those that they choose for themselves. Staff work together well and show a good understanding of how children learn. The outdoor space, though limited in size, is used well to support children's development across all areas of learning. As a result of the good provision, children progress well and a majority attain the expected learning goals when they move to Year 1, with many exceeding them, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the good improvements in mathematics provision to ensure that standards are lifted to at least match that of English and science.
- Strengthen the resources for ICT to enable pupils to have more ready access to computers as an integral part of classroom activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress. In English, progress is outstanding throughout the school and standards are exceptionally high. Good progress in Years 1 and 2 secures significantly above average standards in national tests. In the past, progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, particularly for the most able pupils, has been satisfactory. However, the changes in the curriculum, which have included providing more dedicated time to practical and problem solving aspects of mathematics, are paying dividends and there are clear signs of progress being accelerated. Current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain high standards in mathematics as well as English and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning impact very positively on their achievement. Older pupils develop into mature and responsible young people who make a good contribution to the life of the school. They grasp, with relish, the many opportunities available to take responsibility. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. They have a highly developed understanding of the need for exercise and a good diet and they also discuss how they can help the very few pupils whose packed lunches are not sufficiently healthy! Pupils know about how to stay safe, including when using the Internet as well as in relation to road and personal safety. Pupils' excellent inter-personal skills, when linked to their good literacy and numeracy skills, result in them being well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Even though teachers' planning is particularly challenging, lessons are prepared well to meet the wide range of pupils' needs in mixed age classes. The more able, for example, benefit from more challenging tasks. High quality specialist teaching in modern languages and music helps to develop learning in these areas. In literacy and numeracy, some classes are split to enable single year groups to be taught together. This is the case in the upper junior class and also for younger children, who benefit from smaller groups in the well-taught letter and sounds lessons. Lessons are characterised by a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils thrive. Skilled teaching assistants make a good contribution towards the good learning and progress of those that find learning difficult. Teaching and learning in mathematics has benefited from the recent improvements and this now needs to be bed-down.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and often provides exciting learning opportunities for pupils. Visitors and out of school visits add variety and enrichment. Pupils particularly enjoy the wide range of clubs offered and also almost half the upper class benefit from instrumental tuition. Teachers take care to make sure that lessons build successfully on pupils' interests and ideas and learning is also enhanced by the wide range of special weeks such as those for science and drama. In addition, links with a school in Ghana have strengthened pupils' global awareness. Also, pupils talk excitedly about their interest in astronomy that has resulted from some exceptional opportunities to access time on world-class telescopes and from observing moon rocks. Although the curriculum for ICT is of good quality, opportunities for teachers to plan for using computers in lessons is limited because there are not sufficient resources.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is an overwhelming ethos of care and support for pupils. This is backed up by rigorous attention to procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils. The school works in very close partnership with parents, knows its pupils exceptionally well and provides effective support for those that are vulnerable. Pupils' academic progress is carefully tracked and pupils have a very good understanding of their targets and what they need to do to meet them. There have been significant improvements in teachers' marking of work since the previous inspection. This is now of high quality.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The high quality of the headteacher's leadership and management is pivotal to the success of the school. She continues to ensure that the strong nurturing environment and the good quality provision secure strong progress for pupils. She enables all staff with responsibilities to make a positive contribution to the good processes for checking both the school's provision and pupils' progress. These lead to accurate and rigorous evaluations of the school's position and

support the good quality of the school's strategic planning. However, some subjects such as ICT and English do not have individual action plans and this limits the opportunity for senior leaders or governors to monitor development in these areas. There has been good improvement in both standards and provision since the previous inspection and this demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. Governance is good. Governors carry out their responsibilities effectively and they provide good support for the school and are also centrally involved in the monitoring of developments.

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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?	2
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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Halam C of E Primary School, Halam, Newark, NG22 8AE

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited you recently. You were all extremely polite and keen to talk to me about your work and your school.

There are many good things about your school. Here are some of them.

- You reach high standards and make good progress in your learning.
- You behave exceptionally well and work hard to help others.
- You enjoy school and the good range of things for you to do. I was pleased to hear that you thoroughly enjoy all the clubs and musical activities that are available for you.
- All the adults make sure that you are exceptionally well looked after.
- Your headteacher, and all the other people who help run your school are very good at making sure that you receive a good education.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school. However, all the adults want it to be even better. I have asked Mrs Brown, the staff and governors to do two things. Firstly, to make sure that those of you that are in middle and upper primary classes continue to make as much progress in mathematics as you have this year. Secondly, to get more computers so that you can use them regularly as part of lessons. I know that the governors have allocated lots of money to buy some laptops so I hope that when you get them they help you to enjoy your learning even more!

You can help by continuing to work hard to meet your targets, particularly in mathematics.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector