

High Ercall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123370
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	314576
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Sims

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	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Price
Headteacher	Lin Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Church Road High Ercall Telford TF6 6AF
Telephone number	01952 387570
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- Pupils' progress in writing.
- The opportunities provided for pupils to develop independent learning skills and to use their initiative.
- The effectiveness of subject leadership.

Evidence was gathered from observations of pupils at work and play, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and an analysis of parents' views. 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, and they have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

High Ercall Primary School serves a rural community and is smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are taught in five classes, all but one of which are mixed age classes. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal time is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

High Ercall Primary School is a good school. It has some outstanding features, which make it into a school which is greatly appreciated by most parents and thoroughly enjoyed by almost all of the pupils. A visitor to the school cannot fail to be struck by the excellent behaviour, politeness and enthusiasm of the pupils and the well presented, stimulating and interesting learning environment over which the dedicated and hard-working team of teaching and non-teaching staff have taken so much care.

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the staff have provided the pupils with a wealth of opportunities to develop their understanding of what they need to do to lead a healthy lifestyle, adopt safe practices and make a positive contribution to the local and wider community. Pupils show a quite remarkable understanding of how the development of their 'Five Rs' (responsibility, reliability, resilience, respectfulness and resourcefulness) will enable them to achieve well and develop the skills they need for their future lives, whilst at the same time enjoying what they do. The school's emphasis on these aspects of pupils' education is reflected in the excellent curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support, and ensures that pupils' personal development and well-being are of the highest order. Pupils are not just given new knowledge and understanding, but are taught how to think about what makes a good learner and to reflect on their own learning.

Life is full of interest at High Ercall. The youngest children love an aerobic session before settling down to work. Others enjoy a competition to see who can grow the tallest runner bean. Older children are proud of being interviewed on the local radio and addressing a conference on how the school achieves the five outcomes. In all classes, the pupils work together enthusiastically and show excellent teamwork and collaboration. A termly theme provides interest to the curriculum, a common sense of purpose and a well balanced range of activities. Time is given to producing good quality work in design and technology, information and communication technology is used widely and there is plenty of opportunity for physical activity. A varied programme of visits, visitors and special events enriches the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 mention their residential visit in the autumn term as the highlight of their time at school. Whole-school projects, such as supporting a school in Kenya, provide children with a global perspective, and the X-Factor competition which has been organised for the last three years to raise funds for this project has seen increasing numbers of pupils being prepared to stand up and perform in front of others.

Academically, pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching and learning is good. Some of the teaching is outstanding. The skills shown by children when they start school vary widely, but are broadly at the levels expected for their age. By the time they leave school, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Because of the headteacher's efforts to introduce a more collaborative approach to planning the curriculum and to get staff to look critically at their own teaching, the quality of teaching is getting even better. This is reflected in the improving national test results at the end of Year 2, which have been well above average for the last three years. These higher standards are gradually percolating through the school, so that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to reach higher standards in their national tests than the previous year group. The staff are not content to leave things where they are, so they analyse pupils' performance carefully to identify where improvements need to be made. As a result, standards in writing have improved this year.

All of the positive features of this school have arisen because of good leadership and management. The school is managed efficiently and well. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are robust and well organised. The headteacher has provided an exceptionally clear sense of direction for the school, encouraged a collaborative style of leadership, but has also placed greater expectations on staff to lead and develop their subject responsibilities. Staff have responded well to this direction, are developing as leaders and beginning to fulfil their roles well. Governors, too, provide good support. The initiative to provide a link governor for each class has strengthened relationships between governors and staff, and has helped the governing body to gain a good understanding of what is happening within the school.

Pupils' excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle is not always put into practice, as some pupils bring snacks from home that are not particularly healthy. Attendance is good, but not amongst the top 20% of schools. Although pupils of all abilities are achieving well, they are not achieving at the highest level because some of the tasks they are given are not challenging enough. For example, the occasional worksheet which requires pupils to give one-word answers or complete undemanding tasks does not move their learning forward. Although the teachers mark pupils' work regularly, they are not rigorous or consistent enough in pointing out where pupils have made mistakes or how they could improve their work, and they do not give pupils enough opportunity to go back over their work to learn from their mistakes or to improve its quality. The school has not been rigorous enough in its own self-evaluation and follow-up action to ensure that staff demand the highest standards from pupils in their work. However, the way new initiatives have been introduced over the last few years, and the outstanding aspects of the school, which have made it into a lead school within the authority for promoting pupils' personal development, indicate that there is excellent capacity to improve in these areas.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the Reception Year in either September or January according to age and are taught alongside the younger pupils in Year 1. As in the rest of the school, they receive a good education, and the emphasis on and provision for their personal development are outstanding. By the time they leave Reception, standards are above average. From their widely differing starting points, and considering that some children spend significantly less time in Reception than others, they achieve well. They show very good levels of concentration, for example when working on the computers or listening as a whole class to the teacher, and a very well developed sense of responsibility. When given the opportunity to choose their own activities, they make sensible choices and show a very good level of independence as they find their own resources and put them away when they have finished. The teaching is good, lively and enthusiastic. Adults engage well with the children and create a real interest in learning. The outdoor environment is used well at times, though has not yet been integrated as fully as it could be into the children's activities throughout the day. Displays within the classroom indicate that the children are offered a wide variety of stimulating and interesting activities over the year.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that pupils receive consistent and more critical feedback on their work that shows them where they have made mistakes and what they need to improve.
- Provide pupils with sufficient time to respond to teachers' feedback.

- Ensure that pupils are always provided with sufficiently challenging work.

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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	1

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	2
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	1

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?	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?	2
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 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

22 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of High Ercall Primary School, High Ercall, TF6 6AF

I really enjoyed my visit to High Ercall because there were so many interesting things for me to see. I loved discussing with some of you how the 'Five Rs' and the 'Five Outcomes' are influencing life in your school and helping you to become better learners and really well equipped for life in the future. High Ercall is a good school, and it has some outstanding features. These are the main findings of my visit.

- You are all making good progress in English, mathematics and science, and the standards you reach are better than in many schools.
- You show an exceptional level of maturity, independence, self-confidence and self-awareness.
- You are friendly, courteous and extremely well behaved in lessons and around the school, and this made it a delight to be a visitor in your school.
- You receive good teaching in every class and your teachers are particularly good at helping you to discover what makes you into good learners.
- The range of learning activities, the emphasis on helping you to be healthy and safe, enjoy and achieve, contribute and succeed, and the quality of care, guidance and support are all outstanding.
- Your headteacher is very good at giving people good ideas and getting them to work together, and all of the staff work hard to make your school as good as it is.

I think High Ercall could be outstanding in every respect. In order to achieve this I have asked the headteacher and teachers to ensure that they do not waste any time by giving you work which you find easy, but that they always challenge you to learn new things. I have also asked them to give you more feedback on your work and to be a bit more critical when marking it, so that you can see where you have made mistakes and what things you need to improve.

I should like to encourage you all to: strive for the highest standards you can possibly achieve; continue to be respectful to others; carry out your work and duties responsibly and reliably; show your resourcefulness by using your creativity and imagination; and be resilient when you are shown where you have made mistakes and what you need to improve. Finally, I should like to thank those of you who took time to show me around and talk to me – I really did enjoy my visit.

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham Sims Lead inspector