

Hemington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123646
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314655
Inspection date	9 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Burghart

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	26
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	3
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Wakeling
Headteacher	Stephen Heath
Date of previous school inspection	18 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hemington Radstock BA3 5XU
Telephone number	01373 834320
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very small primary school. Pupils are drawn from a wide area, parts of which are recognised as being disadvantaged. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. Children start school during the academic year in which they are age five as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). They join a class with pupils from Years 1 and 2. All pupils are of White British heritage.

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 satisfactory school. It takes excellent pastoral and physical care of pupils and is extremely successful in cultivating their personal development. Because it is well led and managed, the school has weathered the disruption caused by staff change and illness over the past three years. It is now on a stable footing and well placed to develop further. The headteacher, staff and governors have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in bringing about improvements. Parents and pupils, many of whom started school elsewhere and transferred to Hemington, are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Comments such as, 'The school has more than lived up to my expectations!' and, 'A wonderful, safe and nurturing environment,' are typical views.

With such small year groups, generalising about skills, knowledge and experience when children first join the school is difficult. School records show that these are broadly average, having improved recently with the introduction of pre-school opportunities. However, trends over time are erratic and there are weaknesses in communication, language and literacy skills. Children are very well cared for in Reception as part of the EYFS. They make sound progress academically and outstanding progress in terms of personal, social and emotional development. Through the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in Years 1 to 6, but work does not always fully challenge potentially higher attaining pupils and they sometimes underachieve. Standards are average in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2, and broadly average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Writing standards are below average across the school, with weaker than expected basic skills, for example, in sentence construction, partly due to below average starting points.

Pupils clearly enjoy school and are adamant that they feel safe and know how to keep healthy. They take great pride in the school as a family community and justifiably feel that they are being appropriately prepared for secondary school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Behaviour is excellent in and out of class. With such small numbers and some children travelling relatively long distances, attendance has frequently fallen below average. Currently, it is broadly average with the school paying good attention to policy and procedure.

Provision in terms of teaching, the curriculum and academic guidance and support is satisfactory. There are strengths in how well staff manage learning for the wide range of ages and abilities in each class and in excellent relationships. New initiatives in developing the curriculum with a thematic approach and ensuring that all aspects are fully covered are yet unproven, but there are positive signs. Assessment procedures are in place, but these are not translated into targets individual pupils can use to measure their own progress. Opportunities are missed to show pupils what they need to do to reach the next level and take achievement from 'satisfactory' to 'good'. Staff do not always set challenging targets for the school's overall performance. A measure of the effectiveness of leadership and management is that the issues raised for improvement in this report are closely matched to the priorities of the school's own development plan. Work is already in hand to bring about improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children are given a safe and very happy start to education because staff are caring, considerate and welcoming. 'Whoopee!' shouted one boy as he ran into class. Routines are established quickly and children clearly feel part of the school family. Children make steady progress in Reception and by the end of the EYFS reach nearly all the expected learning goals. Despite this, standards are still below average in basic writing skills when children enter Year 1. Outstanding provision for personal development ensures that children make excellent progress in this area of learning.

Children are successfully encouraged to make choices and take decisions. They readily make friends, share and join in activities. Consequently, relationships are excellent and behaviour is outstanding. Children become increasingly independent and enjoy a suitable range of activities. Nevertheless, too few of these provide enough challenge for children to develop simple problem solving techniques.

Provision is satisfactory overall. The outside environment is safe and secure and is used effectively, but lacks shade and bad weather protection. There are very good links with parents who are welcomed as partners in their children's learning. Good records are kept of children's development and progress. However, this information is not used enough to set targets for improvement and this restricts progress. Developments are in hand with the EYFS well led and managed by a new and enthusiastic teacher who shares the headteacher's and governors' vision. The capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, giving pupils more opportunities to use and practise writing skills for a variety of purposes.
- Make more effective use of information from assessment to set targets for individual pupils' performance and for the school in general.
- Improve provision, developing teaching and the curriculum to ensure pupils, especially the more able, are fully challenged.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and this results in standards which are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Progress for most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory from generally average starting points. However, pupils' books and comments from pupils themselves indicate that sometimes work is not challenging enough for the more able and that they may not always fulfil their potential. There are examples of good progress for all pupils in some areas, for example in some aspects of reading where introducing a new programme of phonics has been one of the school's priorities. Pupils are keen to express their feelings and opinions orally but when it comes to writing these down the style and content are restricted by weaknesses in descriptive vocabulary, sentence construction and handwriting. Consequently, writing standards are below average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal development is a strength of the school. 'We love it here!' was the collective comment of all seven Year 6 pupils. They speak for the rest of the school. Pupils clearly thoroughly enjoy being at school and flourish in the extremely caring family atmosphere. They show initiative and are keen to take responsibility. There is a very strong ethos, securely based on showing consideration and being considerate. Pupils play an important role in the school as a community and are eager to raise money for charity and support village events. Pupils know how to keep fit and healthy. They feel safe and secure and this helps them grow in confidence and learn from 'mistakes' without fear of failure. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and this underpins first-rate behaviour in and out of classrooms. That attendance has been below average is due to individual pupils' circumstances rather than any negative feelings towards school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching suffered over the last three years from instability in staffing. During this period pupils made less progress than at the time of the last inspection. However, the situation is now resolved and there are signs that things are getting back on the right track, with obvious improvements to learning in the EYFS and Years 1 and 2. There are strengths in how pupils are encouraged to enjoy their work and in excellent relationships at all levels. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards, manage time and resources effectively, and work well with teaching assistants to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An area for development (already appreciated by the school's self-evaluation) is in raising expectations of more able pupils, providing them with greater levels of challenge. Another key area is in making use of individual target setting to help pupils understand what they are capable of and how they can be more involved in their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in that it supports pupils' learning. It is satisfactorily planned to ensure that pupils enjoy what they are doing and, in the mixed age classes, have a rolling programme of work to avoid unnecessary duplication. It is enriched by, what is for a small school, a good range and number of out-of- classroom activities including clubs, visits and visitors. The teaching of French and, until recently, German is a positive feature. The strong emphasis on personal, social and health education makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal development. The school has just begun new initiatives designed to develop the curriculum to introduce an international dimension and help pupils become more aware of cultural and multicultural issues. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these on pupils' learning, and too early to judge the curriculum overall as 'good' which is the school's view but there are positive signs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Although the overall judgment in terms of care, guidance and support is satisfactory, the pastoral and physical care on offer for pupils is outstanding. Because of this, relationships are excellent and pupils are extremely happy and ready to learn. Staff really do know pupils well and links with parents and outside agencies are good. Academic support in terms of target setting to raise expectations and make pupils aware of how they can make improvements is not developed well enough. The most obvious effects of this are that not enough is consistently expected of more able pupils and that pupils' achievement generally is satisfactory rather than good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The now established, albeit small, team of staff and governors is well led by the headteacher. Together, this team runs the school efficiently on a day-to-day basis and strategic level. Resources are well deployed and the impact of decisions is evaluated. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is well managed, as is provision for the EYFS. Governance is good with the school regularly held to account in a supportive, constructive manner. Self-evaluation is effective in bring about improvements, for example to accommodation and standards in reading. The headteacher ensures the school has educational direction and has fashioned a vision for Hemington that reflects the views of pupils, parents, staff, governors and the local community. Through its effective commitment to community cohesion, the school plays an integral part in village life. Areas for further development in management include making more use of assessment to see that all pupils are always well challenged and that in turn the school sets itself high enough expectations for pupils' overall academic achievement.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

10 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hemington Primary School, Radstock BA3 5XU

A huge thank you for your warm welcome when we visited. We were very impressed by the way you were able to tell us how you feel about your school. It was a treat to spend the day with you all. You do your school credit! We found that the school does its job and that you are being given a satisfactory, all round education. We can see you are proud of your school. There is a lot to be pleased with.

- Here are some of the highlights.
- The way you are being helped to grow up as sensible, considerate young people is excellent.
- There is an impressive family atmosphere and sense of belonging.
- The school takes outstanding care of you.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- It is clear that you really enjoy school.
- The school is well run and is well set for the future.
- The school has good links with your parents and plays a successful part in village life.

In order for the school to be even better we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do the following things:

- Make sure you reach higher standards in writing.
- Make more use of what they know about you to set targets so you can see how you can improve your work.
- Make sure that the work you have to do is hard enough, especially for those in the top groups.

You can help by continuing to work hard. Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart Lead inspector