

North Heath Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125949
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315367
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Eira Gill

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	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Shirley Breeden
Headteacher	Carol Ann Hydes
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Erica Way Horsham RH12 5XL
Telephone number	01403 254790
Fax number	01403 240369

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

North Heath Community Primary is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils come from a White British background and a very small minority speak English as an additional language.

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 good school at the heart of its community. There is a sense of stability and several parents make such comments as, 'We really like the sense of community at the school. My daughter enjoys every minute – long may it continue!' The headteacher has been successful in creating a calm and industrious school with a good track record of maintaining above average standards overall and particularly high standards in English. As a result, the school is acting as a 'pilot school' to judge the effectiveness of a new national assessment strategy in English. One parent pointed out, 'I feel very lucky that my children attend such a good school!'

In Year 6, standards are well above average in English, above average in science and average in mathematics. In Year 2, standards are at above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics and have been for the past five years, often considerably so. Achievement is good overall for all pupils including the children in the Reception year, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. This reflects the good teaching and learning throughout the school. In the past, however, the school reports that different methods of teaching pupils how to work out problems in number had been confusing for the pupils to understand. Improvements in this aspect of teaching mathematics have been successful and standards are rising. Marking of pupils' work is regularly carried out but does not usually refer to their targets or involve pupils in assessing their own progress.

Behaviour is good and exemplary in assemblies. The Year 6 pupils thoroughly enjoy helping the small children in the Reception classes and this is improving their social skills. Attitudes to learning are mostly good. Pupils show a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle, with a good regard for the safety of themselves and others. The good curriculum has plenty of cross-curricular links and the pupils, for example, enthusiastically cook Second World War meals and eat them! Pupils engage in a wide variety of activities in small groups run by teachers and teaching assistants. The well-planned open-air theatre and peace garden are contributing to pupils' good personal development.

Good systems are in place for the care of the pupils. The school has a well-established system for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress but the data are not monitored frequently enough to spot pupils who might be falling behind, especially in mathematics.

The strengths of the school's leadership and management are seen in the way that above average standards have been sustained over many years. Governors give good support and challenge the staff. Based on the good quality of self-evaluation, recent improvements and its long track record of success, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Good leadership ensures that children benefit from good teaching. The attention given by the staff to the children's care and welfare is outstanding. Reception classes are well resourced and organised to create stimulating areas where all children enjoy and experience successful learning. Children's progress is good across all areas of learning and strongest in their personal development. Children's behaviour is exemplary. By the end of the Reception year, children are likely to exceed expectations in all areas of learning, although their writing skills are broadly average. There are good links with pre-school providers, including the adjacent nursery and with parents. Several parents indicated

their complete satisfaction with the care shown to their children. One wrote, 'After only just a few days I am very pleased with the school. My little girl is loving it!' All staff work very well as a team and complete regular and accurate assessments of the children's developing skills. Teachers plan activities with care to meet the children's needs, although suitably challenging work for higher attaining children was not always evident during the inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Leadership and management at all levels should monitor pupils' progress towards their targets more frequently to identify what needs to be improved, especially in mathematics.
- Involve pupils more in the assessment of their own work and ensure that they know what they have to do to meet their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with broadly average standards and achieve well to reach above average standards. Progress in the required areas of learning is good overall at the end of the Reception year. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and quickly catch up in their writing skills so that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are securely above average by the end of Year 2.

By the end of Year 6, in the unvalidated 2007 national tests, standards were well above average in English, above average in science and average in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are in the early stages of learning English make good progress because of effective teaching and good use of skilled and well-trained teaching assistants. The development of pupils' basic skills, together with their good personal qualities, prepares them well for their future.

Although progress is good overall in Years 3 to 6, not all pupils make the same progress in all subjects. Progress slows down in Years 3 and 4 in writing and mathematics. In writing, progress picks up sharply in Years 5 and 6, but in mathematics, slower progress is evident until Year 6. Progress in reading is consistently good throughout the school. The school has met its targets in English in 2007 but not in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good behaviour makes a strong contribution to good learning in most lessons. Behaviour in the playground is generally good, although a small minority sometimes needs extra guidance from teachers and other adults. Pupils show respect towards each other and the majority play well together. They are usually attentive and show good concentration. Most pupils have well-developed social skills and are very polite and happy to chat to visitors. They have good conversational skills. Attendance is above average and reflects well the pupils' great enjoyment of school. All pupils feel valued, safe and secure. They can talk knowledgeably about healthy diets, safe lifestyles and are very conscious of being eco-friendly. Pupils take part in plenty of sporting activities. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers generally plan their lessons well. Teachers in the Reception classes are particularly skilled in organising activities that enable children to improve their independence. Most teachers encourage pupils to talk to each other in lessons to share their ideas and solve problems. The result is a high level of pupil participation as well as a noticeable improvement in thinking skills. Pupils enjoy these sessions and are very keen to answer questions quickly and show off their knowledge. Occasionally, productive teaching and learning conversations between teachers and individual pupils, or groups of pupils, are not so evident and they begin to lose interest and concentration. The school is aware that, in the past, different methods of teaching calculating skills in mathematics have not been entirely successful. Older pupils say they enjoy their homework and say it is marked promptly. However, marking in pupils' books rarely refers to their targets. Nor does marking indicate whether pupils have been successful in meeting the defined task, for example using formal language in letter writing. Pupils are not encouraged to assess their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum throughout the school that contributes well to pupils' good achievement and personal development. Improvements to the mathematics curriculum are set to improve progress in pupils' learning, but are not yet embedded fully enough or long enough to lift their achievement. There is a wide range of after-school activities and good opportunities to learn musical instruments. The well-planned peace garden and open-air theatre contribute to the pupils' good spiritual development and to their musical, speaking and listening skills. The good attention given by the school to improve cross-curricular planning is enhancing the curriculum and is contributing well to pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils' understanding of history grows when they use old recipes to bake cakes made during the Second World War, and compose music to accompany poetry or war stories. In art, pupils show above average skills while using a wide variety of media to produce good quality pieces of artwork. Improvements are evident in opportunities for learning in information and communication technology and in the physical education curriculum. Links with other providers give pupils plenty of opportunities to take part in sporting and other events. Their artwork, for example, is about to be displayed in the local church for the Harvest Festival.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good induction procedures ensure that children in the Reception class make a confident start and progress well. Child protection procedures are fully in place and proper checks are made on all adults who work in the school. Health and safety procedures are good. Pupils say they are well cared for by all adults. One said, 'I feel really safe because we have caring teachers and friends'. All adults are vigilant and reinforce expectations of behaviour in the playground. The procedures for ensuring good attendance are robust. The school has good relationships with the parents, the community and other agencies. The majority of parents indicate they strongly agree that the school cares for their children well.

Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by their teachers and teaching assistants. Parents very much appreciate this support and one said, 'Thanks to the devotion of the staff my child has overcome social and writing difficulties'. Good communication exists with parents who are given a copy of their children's targets at intervals throughout the year. The school sets accurate targets for pupils but does not monitor their progress frequently enough to see how well they are doing, especially in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides purposeful leadership and has sustained above average standards and a good ethos over many years. Monitoring of teaching and learning is fully in place with a wide range of observations, which involve middle managers. Self-evaluation is generally accurate. It is used successfully to improve the enrichment of the curriculum by linking subjects, which helps to quicken the pace of pupils' learning and enjoyment, and so improve achievement. However, it does not always indicate how teaching and learning could be improved. The newly established senior management team is enthusiastic in seeking to contribute to further improvement. Challenging long-term targets are in place for pupils and the school as a whole. Managers are aware that the good system for tracking pupils' progress is not monitored frequently enough by them to identify pupils who might be lagging behind.

Governors are well informed and fully involved in school planning. They are supportive and are generally aware of the need for improvements in specific areas. There is strong evidence of challenge and useful debate at governing body meetings.

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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?	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	2
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	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?	2

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Heath Community Primary School, Horsham, RH12 5XL

Thank you for welcoming my colleagues and me to your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and observing your lessons. You were all very friendly and polite throughout the two days. Your headteacher has created a calm community where you all feel safe and well looked after. We think your school is a good school.

Here are the things that I found best about your school:

- Your headteacher, senior leaders and the governors take great care of you and make sure teaching is good.
- Your behaviour is good and you have good attitudes to your work.
- You really enjoy school and attend very regularly.
- You all have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe.
- You make good progress in reading and science as a result of good teaching.
- Those of you who find it a little bit more difficult to read and do mathematics are making good progress with the help of the teaching assistants.
- Those who speak English as an additional language are making good progress.
- You have good opportunities to learn history, art, French and cooking in interesting lessons. I know you enjoyed making Second World War cakes!!
- You take responsibility by looking after the small children in the Reception classes.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do the following things to help you make better progress:

- Make sure that they use the information about your progress more effectively to improve teaching and to make sure you are all learning as well as you should.
- Make sure all the teachers give you consistent guidance when they mark your work and give you targets that help you to know how well you are doing and how you can do even better. You can help by thinking about how you have improved in lessons and helping to set the targets.

With best wishes

Eira Gill Lead inspector

23 September 2007

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Lead inspector