

Highgate Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120049
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	319499
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton HMI

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	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pete Murrell
Headteacher	D Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2007
School address	Heathcote Drive Sileby Loughborough LE12 7ND
Telephone number	01509 813968
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

When the school was inspected in June 2007, it was judged to require significant improvement. It was required to: • improve achievement in mathematics and science by ensuring that teachers are provided with, and use, information on pupils' capabilities to plan lessons that are suitably demanding • improve the progress made by girls in mathematics by encouraging them to take a greater part in lessons • improve assessment and marking to provide pupils with clear and accurate guidance on what they need to do to improve • improve the rigour of monitoring to ensure managers clearly identify weaknesses in provision and check the progress made in addressing them. A monitoring visit was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors six months after the inspection when it was judged to be making satisfactory progress in addressing these issues. Now after one year, this reinspection of the school was carried out by one of her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Highgate is a popular school in the industrial village of Sileby. Nearly all pupils come from White British ethnic backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The average number of pupils admitted each year is 27, with most taught in single year groups. The proportions of pupils in receipt of free school meals or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below the national averages. The school has recently achieved Healthy School status and a silver award as an Eco school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Highgate is now a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. One parent commented, 'It is a big family environment.' The outcome of the last inspection a year ago was to spur the headteacher and staff on to a renewed determination to improve provision. They have been successful. The achievement of boys and girls in mathematics has improved considerably and is now good, especially at Key Stage 2. Pupils are now reaching the standards expected for their age. This is because a good system for monitoring, assessing and tracking the progress made by pupils is now in place and used by all staff. All have worked very hard to make sure that pupils are fully involved in their own learning. When a pupil is not making the expected progress, appropriate support is provided to put them back on track. As a result, pupils make satisfactory progress and, in accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

There are still issues to tackle in the school though, as the progress made by pupils across the school is uneven. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage from their low starting points when they start the school and achieve standards that are above national averages by the end of Year 2. The historical slower progress made in Year 3 has now been rectified. Whilst the older pupils are now making good progress, they have yet to reach the levels expected for their age, especially in writing. Standards at the end of Year 6 have improved from below the national averages a year ago to the expected level now.

All this change has happened through the good leadership of the headteacher, along with that of the senior team. There is now a stronger sense of direction to the school's work. Leadership and management across the school remains satisfactory overall, as they were at the last inspection. Not enough has yet been done to spread leadership roles and responsibilities to middle managers and governors or to work with parents to help them appreciate their role in supporting learning at home.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now satisfactory overall. During the inspection some good and outstanding teaching was observed, especially in Key Stage 2. However, inconsistencies remain. For example, there is a lack of variety in the questioning strategies used by teachers to challenge individual pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. There are insufficient opportunities for practical activities and purposeful writing opportunities in lessons. Inspectors agree with parents too that there are insufficient after-school clubs available.

The key strength of the school is the good way it promotes the personal development and well-being of pupils. Pupils enjoy coming to school and parents agree. The pupils are polite and well behaved. They have positive attitudes to their learning and are provided with lots of opportunities to develop their confidence, independence and self-esteem. For example, pupils in Year 4 go on residential visits and pupils in Year 6 willingly take on various leadership opportunities.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their education at Highgate, having entered the school with standards below those expected for their age. For example, standards in writing, their knowledge

and understanding of the world and creative development are well below expected levels. Their progress is carefully tracked and children with any learning difficulties are identified early and helped accordingly. Good teaching and an interesting curriculum means the majority of children make good progress in all areas of learning. Most children leave the Foundation Stage at the expected levels for their age and a significant minority do even better. Children are encouraged to become independent and organise themselves well when choosing from a wide range of activities. They enjoy regular cooking sessions, with the emphasis placed on healthy eating. A welcoming induction into school ensures children settle quickly and parents are fully informed. The school has already recognised that the area outside the classroom is currently only satisfactory and would be further enhanced by the addition of all weather protection and the development of the garden area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for practical activities and purposeful writing across the curriculum.
- Develop a greater variety of questioning strategies within lessons to focus pupils' learning and further raise standards.
- Develop stronger links with parents to clarify the role they can play in supporting their child's learning.

A small proportion of the 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 by the end of Year 6, standards are generally in line with national expectations. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage with a significant number at, and some beyond, the levels expected for their age. Good progress continues to be made in Years 1 and 2 and, by the end of Year 2, standards are above expected levels in English, mathematics and science.

A legacy of previous inconsistent progress means that some of the older pupils are not achieving as well as they should. However, this gap is narrowing rapidly and the school's data now shows an improving picture of progress in Key Stage 2. Strong evidence demonstrates pupils are responding to better quality teaching. Inconsistent and slower progress in the past is still having a detrimental effect on test results, as pupils have to catch up on the gaps in their learning. The school's new monitoring systems ensure pupils' achievement is tracked robustly and this is having a positive impact on progress. Consequently, the achievement by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory as a result of the effective support given to them.

Latest data shows that pupils are making good progress in mathematics and any gender differences have been eradicated. Progress in writing remains weaker. However, the recently introduced 'Big Write' scheme is having a powerful impact and more confident writers are emerging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils of Highgate are well-rounded, mature and articulate individuals, able to express their views well. They are very polite and welcoming to visitors. Pupils enjoy their lessons and

have a sensible attitude to their learning. Their behaviour is good during lessons and break times. The playground 'games buddies' help to set out activities to make playtimes more active and enjoyable. However, dinner supervisors were not sufficiently engaged with the pupils during the inspection. Pupils feel safe in school and know they can approach any adult at times of difficulty.

Attendance is satisfactory. The school does all it can to encourage better attendance, drawing parents' attention to the adverse effects on pupils' education when holidays are taken during term time. Pupils have a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles and are able to make good choices, although some pupils in the dining hall discussed their understanding of the unhealthy content of some of their own lunch boxes. They understand the importance of exercise to develop their muscles and improve heart function. As one pupil expressed, 'You need to keep fit to prevent obesity.' Staffing issues this year have meant that the school council has not had as high a profile as previously. However, when council members talk about their current ideas for recycling and a talent competition, they are listened to. The 'Eco warriors' take their responsibilities seriously, and go around the school turning off lights and picking up litter. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory and improving.

Good involvement with the local community has included a Holocaust Memorial day, where pupils' poetry was displayed in the local museum. A day to celebrate the opening of the school's Art Garden, including poetry and maypole dancing, was also enjoyed by parents. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is good. However, pupils do not all have a good enough understanding of life in multicultural Britain.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There is now much more consistency about the quality of teaching across the school. A focus since the last inspection on the marking of pupils' work and the tracking of their progress has resulted in a stronger awareness by all staff of pupils who may need additional support. Monitoring of teaching by the senior staff and the local authority confirms a satisfactory, and improving, profile. In the satisfactory lessons, whilst teachers plan well and share the learning objectives for the lesson with the class they talk too much at the expense of pupil learning. In addition, teachers do not make sure all pupils take part in the lessons by asking appropriately challenging questions that extend the more able and support the less able pupils. In the better lessons, the objectives are regularly consolidated during the lesson and reviewed at the end to check for understanding and to inform future planning. In one outstanding Year 5 science lesson, pupils were left in no doubt about the impact of smoking on health through a powerful activity using treacle and a sponge to illustrate the effects of tar on the lungs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and contains some good features such as residential visits and a wide range of visitors invited into school. Poets, authors and artists enrich the curriculum and enhance the school environment with sculptures and other collaborative art work. Experts in circus skills encourage pupils' confidence, collaborative work and enjoyment. Good use is also made of arts staff from the local upper school, a media arts college. The college's expertise focuses specific arts based work on purposeful outcomes; for

example, a concert, a DVD of history work, and a piece of textile work inspired by Aztec designs. However, this richness within some aspects of the curriculum is not sufficiently complemented by practical activities in other subjects, especially in mathematics and science, or enough writing with a sense of purpose across the curriculum. The current extra-curricular provision is very limited and does not extend pupil learning enough. For these reasons, the curriculum is satisfactory overall.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care and academic guidance are strengths. Pupils feel well cared and listened to. Thorough checks are made on any adults who work in the school and most systems are in place to keep pupils safe and secure. However, insufficient risk assessments are carried out across the school, such as for cooking activities and school trips. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and their progress is carefully tracked ensuring they make at least satisfactory progress. Although support from teaching assistants during lessons is generally helpful, this is not consistent in all lessons. The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils are now fully involved in their own learning, which was an issue at the last inspection. Pupils are now aware of what is needed to make their work better through the good comments teachers are making in their books and by pupils' clear understanding of learning targets. In all lessons, the use of learning objectives and steps to success were clear. One pupil commented, 'steps to success really helps me with my learning'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are rapidly improving. With good support from the local authority, the headteacher and senior staff now have a much stronger capacity to make the necessary improvements. This is illustrated by their record of acting on the issues raised at the last inspection: the improved progress in mathematics and science; the greater consistency of teaching; and, in the rigorous tracking of pupil progress. There is a stronger sense of direction and purpose now. More staff are becoming involved in the evaluation of the school's provision, although there still remains work to do with subject leaders and governors.

Governance is satisfactory and improving. Ongoing governor training is having a positive impact on assisting the school in identifying where it needs to focus its efforts. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate although, up to now, he has retained too much ownership of the self-evaluation process. However, the core subject leaders increasingly taking on more accountability for achievement and standards in their individual subject areas.

An outside professional associated with the school described how welcoming the school was to visitors and willing to take on new ideas. He summed it up as 'an open, inviting and happy 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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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 disabilities make progress	3

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	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highgate Community Primary School, Sileby LE12 7ND

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know what we thought about your school and how it could improve.

- You go to a school that has improved a lot over the last year and is now a satisfactory and improving school.
- You are now making much better progress than you did a year ago, especially with your maths work.
- You and your teachers know how well you are doing and teachers give you the right sort of help so you don't get behind with your work.
- You behave well in lessons and outside at playtime.
- Your teachers do a good job and work hard.
- The other adults in the school help you a lot as well.
- There are not enough after school clubs and activities.
- Year 6 pupils obviously enjoy the jobs they have to do like playground buddies and monitors.
- You are lucky to be going to such a happy school.
- Your headteacher leads your school well.
- You obviously love going on the residential visits and having exciting visitors like poets and artists in school to stimulate your work.

To make your school even better, I have suggested that your headteacher and the other teachers do the following things.

- Make your lessons even more exciting and give you extra opportunities to write about things.
- Make sure all of you answer questions in every lesson.
- Think about how your parents can help you more with your work at home.

Best wishes for the future.

Clive Kempton Her Majesty's Inspector

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