

Heartsease Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134957
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	319591
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	396
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Huggins
Headteacher	Mrs Christina Kenna
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rider Haggard Road Norwich NR7 9UE
Telephone number	01603 307820
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This new primary school, created by the reorganisation of two first schools and a middle school, opened six months ago. The school is larger than average. It has two special classes to support pupils who have difficulty with speech and language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small minority speak English as an additional language and of these some pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average as is the proportion who have statements of special educational needs. Children's attainment on entry to the school is well below average, especially in communication, language and literacy.

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, largely because of the outstanding and visionary leadership of the headteacher. Much has been accomplished in a short time. Already, good teaching is an established feature of the school and as a result pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly. Many pupils joined Years 1 to 6 in September with standards that were often well below national expectations. Most pupils, including those who find learning difficult and those with English as an additional language, are making good progress. The work that pupils produced six months ago compared with the quality of the work that they are producing now, shows clearly that many have made exceptional progress. Standards are still below national expectations but pupils in Years 1 to 6 are catching up fast.

Personal development is good. Pupils are happy, courteous and sensible. They are becoming confident learners. The brand new building has helped to foster a positive climate for learning. One pupils' comment was typical, 'I love this school and I'm proud of it. I think that it's a really good school and we are all being given a good start to our education.' Pupils develop a good understanding of their responsibilities to others and are prepared well for the next steps in their education. They know how to stay safe and look after themselves.

The good teaching promotes successful learning. Well-equipped classrooms provide a calm, purposeful learning environment. Teachers have received clear guidance from leaders about how to teach effective lessons. Consequently a common approach to teaching is developing and inconsistencies are being ironed out. Teachers' expectations of pupils' performance have been raised and pupils have a clear understanding that only their very best efforts are acceptable. This has contributed to good gains in progress and a general improvement in standards. The curriculum is developing satisfactorily, with learning based on themes or topics. However, these are not yet taught in the depth necessary to give pupils a wide enough range of new skills and knowledge. Across the school, drama is used well to stimulate pupils' imagination and to make learning exciting.

Care, guidance and support are good. The pastoral manager does an excellent job in sorting out any concerns or worries that pupils or their parents might have. The school provides a safe and secure learning environment and arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. Pupils receive good academic guidance and have a clear understanding of what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning. Most parents are pleased with the new school. One comment was typical, 'Considering what a mammoth task this new school was, the leadership has dealt with it admirably. The teaching and discipline standards are excellent.' Despite the school's efforts, a small number of parents are not yet fully committed to entering into partnership with the school.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff are determined to provide the best possible learning opportunities for all pupils. Many middle managers are new to their roles and have not yet had enough impact on raising standards. The governing body is highly effective and has helped to manage the establishment of the new school well.

The school's self evaluation is accurate and the most important priorities for improvement are clearly identified. The rapid advances made over the past six months show that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle happily in the Nursery and make sound progress, especially in their personal and social development. Staff visit children in their homes before they start school and this helps to sow the seeds for a good partnership in learning. Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on teaching children the link between letters and the sounds and, in this aspect of their learning, progress is good. Role play is often used well to encourage children to articulate their thoughts. However, some of the activities provided do not always result in the rapid learning that many of these children need to compensate for their relatively low starting points. The leadership of this phase of children's education has not set out a clear plan for developing an appropriate curriculum to meet these needs. There has been a lack of investment in resources to support the full development of the Foundation Stage. Outside learning areas are not yet fully operational.

What the school should do to improve further

- Concentrate on building a cohesive school community so that all associated with the school share a commitment to striving for the very best provision for all pupils.
- Develop the roles of subject leaders and middle managers so that they have a major impact on developing the curriculum and improving standards.
- Develop provision for children in the Foundation Stage so that a vibrant, exciting learning environment forms the basis for accelerated learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Progress is accelerating rapidly because leaders have encouraged teachers to have high expectations of pupils' performance. Pupils have risen to the challenges set. Most pupils achieve well because most lessons are matched to pupils' needs and abilities. Pupils are shown what they have to do to succeed. Pupils' work confirms that in September the standards that many attained in each year group were low. Attainment is still below average but pupils' overall rate of progress is good, especially in writing, mathematics and science. The school has rightly highlighted improvement in reading as a priority. New teaching strategies, such as a programme that uses drama to enhance writing skills, have had a positive impact on standards. The good provision in the language development centre, with its emphasis on 'speaking, listening and vocabulary, through a drama rich curriculum', helps pupils with specific needs to achieve well. Across the school, pupils who find learning difficult are supported well and make good progress as do pupils who are at an early stage of learning to speak English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good attitudes to learning because they are beginning to have a belief in themselves as successful learners. They enjoy learning new skills and finding out more about their world. They are well behaved, sensitive to the needs of others and make good friends. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is good. Pupils understand the need to live healthily. They have good opportunities for exercise and sport. Members of the school council represent the pupils' views well. They have succeeded in making the playground

more interesting by deciding what play equipment to provide. They contribute willingly to the wider community by wholeheartedly supporting charitable fund-raising events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan lessons carefully and the best planning includes clear details of how tasks will be modified to enable all groups of pupils to succeed, including those who find learning difficult and the faster learners. Teachers tell pupils what they hope that pupils will learn during the course of a lesson and consult with pupils about how they will be able to tell whether learning has been successful. Imaginative teaching, such as when magic dust is used to transport the class to the woods where the three bears live, encourages enjoyment in learning. However, activities in the Foundation Stage are not always so captivating. Teachers use interactive white boards well to support teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A sound start has been made in developing a curriculum that provides interesting approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers are working hard towards linking subjects together to create themes that capture pupils' interests. Drama features strongly as a basis for providing good learning experiences. Project work is used satisfactorily to give opportunities to develop writing and investigative skills. The personal, social and health education programme is successful in developing pupils' understanding of safe and healthy living. Learning is enriched by out of school clubs, visitors to the school and interesting visits. The curriculum supports the needs of all pupils satisfactorily, including those who find learning difficult. Around the school there are good displays that celebrate pupils' work and encourage high standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral guidance is exceptionally good. The pastoral manager helps to resolve pupils' problems and worries and assists parents where she can, for example by organising parenting classes. Pupils work and play happily together and racial harmony prevails. Pupils report that bullying is not an issue and that they feel safe and secure in school. They know how to look after themselves and have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. The school is a safe and secure place for pupils. Checks on the suitability of all adults are thorough and meet current government requirements. Staff evaluate any potential risks in the activities that they plan and take the necessary steps to minimise them. The training for staff in child protection and associated matters is up to date. Academic guidance is also good, although the very youngest children sometimes need more direction. Oral feedback to pupils is timely, and helpful marking gives clear guidance about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders have put in place good systems to check the quality of teaching and learning, eradicate any inadequate teaching and ensure most lessons are now good. Governors balance their role in supporting the school with that of asking challenging questions and holding staff to account for how well pupils are learning. The driving force behind this good leadership is the headteacher who has a very clear vision of where the school is going and how it will get there. Her vision is based firmly on setting challenging targets to ensure pupils gain the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in later life. A few parents are not as committed and hark back to the past. Some teachers are new to management and are still developing their skills and expertise.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	3
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	3
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

6 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Heartsease Primary School, Norwich, NR7 9UE

What a lovely school! We thoroughly enjoyed our short visit. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. I am writing to you because I thought that you might be interested to know what we thought of your school.

The brand new buildings are great and we think that the bright, spacious, well- equipped classrooms help your learning. There is a calm, business-like feeling about the school. Your headteacher is determined to make your school one of the very best. You are now making good progress and when we looked at your work we were amazed at how much progress many of you have made since September. Some of the work that you produced six months ago was scruffy and sub standard. Now you set out your work neatly, write well and take pride in its quality. This is because teachers expect you to do your very best at all times and you rise to the challenges they set and work hard. They show you exactly what you need to do to improve your work.

You are polite, sensible and well behaved. You know how to stay safe and look after yourselves. You know who you can go to share any worries that you may have. You get on well with each other. You make good friends. You are kind and sensitive to other people's feelings. You go on interesting visits and welcome visitors to the school to help you learn. It was wonderful to see a drummer from a famous pop group working with you in the hall. He was brilliant and you had great fun and learnt so much about drumming.

Everybody needs to work together to make sure that the school continues to grow and flourish. Also the teachers are planning to make your work even more interesting and exciting so that you can reach even higher standards. The Nursery and Reception classes in particular need to be developed so that the very youngest children are helped to master new skills rapidly so that they can also reach high standards.

There are exciting times ahead. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Messer

Lead inspector