

Hightown School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107669
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	324618
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Robert Robinson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	195
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Thomas
Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Prescott
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hightown Road Liversedge West Yorkshire WF15 8BL
Telephone number	01274 335240
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Since the last inspection it has changed from a first school (Nursery to Year 4) to a primary school for pupils aged three to eleven. This is the first year the school has had a Year 6 class. There has been substantial movement of pupils to and from Years 4 to 6 following the recent reorganisation of education in the area. The local social and economic circumstances vary, though overall are less favourable than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The school has Investor in Pupils and an Investor in People awards. It has gained the Activemark and Healthy School Awards. Since the last inspection there have been exceptionally high staff absences. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of adjacent Nursery and Reception classrooms. At the time of the inspection, there was a temporary leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage, as were teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hightown provides a good education for its pupils. The good leadership and management of the headteacher and governors, supported by staff, have enabled the school to improve since the last inspection. The school has been successfully reorganised to provide education for the full primary age range while maintaining pupils' good achievement. The strengths in most aspects of its work and its track record over time provide the school with a good capacity to continue to improve. Links with the local community and other educational providers are well established and benefit pupils' education. Equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils is promoted well.

Standards in Year 6 are currently broadly average. Pupils in Years 1 to 6, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress overall. In the 2008 teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, results were below average with pupils building well on their starting points at the beginning of Year 1. Progress through Years 1 and 2 has improved. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' good progress is the result of effective teaching which is guided by a well thought out and interesting curriculum. Teachers plan lessons well and usually link learning closely to what pupils already know. The pace of learning is brisk. Attractive displays celebrate pupils' work well. They reflect a strong emphasis on linking of subjects together to add purpose and interest in learning. Pupils are aware of their personal and academic targets for improvement and are keen to reach them.

The school cares well for all pupils' pastoral and academic needs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is fostered well. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily and safely. They thoroughly enjoy school and appreciate the good range of sporting opportunities and other extra-curricular clubs. Attendance is satisfactory though despite the school's best efforts it is dipping, particularly in Years 1 and in Reception. Pupils relate well to one another and staff. They are proud of their school and assist in its smooth running. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. This, together with their good progress, supports their future learning.

The senior management team leads the school well and is assisted effectively by subject leaders, many of whom are new to their posts. The tracking of pupils' progress has been recently suitably updated but does not yet enable staff to identify efficiently the rates of progress of different groups of pupils.

Parents overwhelmingly praise the school. A typical comment encapsulated their views, 'A bright, stimulating and friendly environment with polite, happy and confident children'.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children join the school with skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and in mathematical development. Transition arrangements from home to school are effective and children settle happily into school routines. The quality of teaching and welfare arrangements are satisfactory so that children achieve satisfactorily. Children's skills by the end of Reception remain below those expected for their age. The quality of teaching is better in the Nursery than in the Reception. In the Nursery, close attention is given to developing children's personal, social and language skills. This extends children's confidence and self-esteem

and they quickly become independent learners. However, this positive start to schooling is not built on sufficiently in the Reception class. Activities are not always matched well enough to children's needs. A minority of boys need firmer guidance to ensure they make better progress in their learning and do not disturb the learning of others. In the Nursery, a wide range of practical activities engage children's interest and the outdoor area is used appropriately to support learning. There are not enough opportunities for children in the Reception class to work outdoors and this limits their learning experiences. The leadership and management are satisfactory. School leaders are aware of the weaknesses and have begun to take steps to remedy these. Parents appreciate the start their children have in the Nursery.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the consistency of good teaching within the Reception.
- Work with parents to improve attendance particularly in Year 1 and in Reception.
- Refine the systems to monitor the rates of progress of different groups of pupils to check efficiently on the success of initiatives to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. Pupils are now making good progress throughout Years 1 and 2. Results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2008 have shown an improvement with standards in writing making especially good improvement. In 2008, the very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties met their targets. Other pupils in this Year 2 group reached above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.. Pupils in the first Year 6 class in the school are making good progress towards demanding targets set for them to reach by the end of Year 6 and standards are currently average. Progress in Years 5 and 6 is better than normally expected in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are well aware of how to lead healthy lives and are proud to have gained the Activemark and Healthy School Award. They have a good understanding of the dangers of inappropriate use of the Internet. Pupils appreciate all aspects of school life and are well prepared for their future education. Most pupils attend regularly. However, a minority of younger pupils' attendance is not good enough and this adversely affects their progress. Older pupils are keen to be good role models for younger pupils and to help them at playtimes. Links with other schools benefit pupils' awareness of different communities in the locality. Personal development targets, which are consistently agreed between staff and pupils throughout the school, encourage good attitudes to learning and to behaviour. Assemblies, as well as displays, actively celebrate all pupils' achievements. Pupils show pride in their achievements, such as when the large group who successfully played African drums.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress because teaching and learning are good. Most lessons are good and some have outstanding features. In small group work teachers use the skills of teaching assistants well to assist pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties. Most lessons move at a fast pace and questions keeps pupils alert. Occasionally, questioning is not matched closely enough to pupils' level of attainment. In lessons with outstanding features, the teacher's enthusiasm and the setting of interesting tasks capture pupils' interest in learning. In these lessons pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Purposeful role-play activities enliven learning, for example, in Year 6 when pupils acted as cashiers in a supermarket and were responsible for giving correct change.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and contributes effectively to their good progress in literacy and numeracy. A more creative curriculum has successfully linked subjects together making learning more relevant and exciting for pupils. Increasingly pupils are using and practising their writing and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects. Special themed weeks, days and events add to pupils' enjoyment of learning, such as a delicious Nepalese lunch. Personal, social, health and citizenship education raises awareness of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe. Activities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enable them to take a full part in school life. A good range of clubs, visits, visitors and other activities extend pupils' learning experiences. For example, a local Member of Parliament visited the school and talked about his work. Pupils visited a Magistrates Court and took part in a mock trial.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for in an attractive learning environment. Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements. Pupils report they feel safe and know there is always someone to help them sort out any problems. Instances of bullying are rare and pupils are confident these are sorted out quickly. Skilled, well briefed teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Outside agencies also assist these pupils well. Procedures to ensure good attendance are rigorous and involve, when necessary the local authority attendance officers. Despite this, a minority of pupils' attendance remains unsatisfactory adversely affecting attendance rates. Individual pupils' progress is tracked carefully. Pupils are set targets both for the academic and personal development aspects of their learning. Most teachers' marking ensures that pupils know the next steps of their learning. However, this is not consistent across the school so some pupils are not clear about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The recent local reorganisation of education in the area, together with the exceptionally high number of changes in teaching staff at the school since the last inspection have been handled skilfully by the headteacher together with a knowledgeable and supportive governing body. Parents report there has been a seamless transition to extend the age range to eleven. Pupils continue to make good progress and Key Stage 2 provision has improved for older pupils. The senior leadership team has been enlarged, but because of staff absence the Early Years Foundation Stage is temporarily managed by a senior leader who has other major responsibilities. Most subject leaders are new to their posts but they have quickly grasped an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Revised systems to record pupils' progress are now fully operational and clearly provide information for managers and teachers to track individual pupils' progress. However, the data is not collated into an easily accessible format to enable leaders to check on the progress of different groups of pupils or to assess fully the effectiveness of initiatives. The school's self-evaluation is good and areas requiring improvement are quickly identified and swiftly acted upon. The school has strong links with the local community and other schools and promotes community cohesion well. Opportunities to ensure pupils gain a better understanding of diverse communities are in place. For example, the school is linked to a large primary school with a high proportion of pupils from Asian ethnic backgrounds. Visits have taken place between groups of pupils and their parents are actively involved in the project. Fundraising for a local children's hospice and international charities encourages pupils to be aware of the needs of others.

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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?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	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
The extent to which 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	2

The quality of provision

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

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	2
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**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school. Hightown gives you a good education. The school is run well by the headteacher, staff, and governors. The school cares for you well. Your achievement is good during the time you are at the school. You reach expected standards in Year 6 because you are taught well.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage you get off to a good start in the Nursery, but progress slows in Reception. I have asked the school to ensure that teaching and learning are good for all the younger children.

I was impressed by your good behaviour and interest in lessons. You enjoy lessons and appreciate all the school provides. You get on well together and you are courteous to visitors. You are proud of your school. Most of you attend regularly, but attendance rates are slipping, particularly in Year 1 and in Reception. I have asked the school to continue to work with your parents to improve attendance rates.

Your headteacher, staff and governors have done much to improve the school since the last inspection. Ways to check on your progress have been introduced, so that teachers can spot how well you are doing and use this information to plan your next step in learning. I have asked the school to use the information to check the progress of different groups so that it can judge the success of its work to raise your standards further.

I appreciated talking to you about your work and watching you learn. I trust that you will keep doing your best and working with the headteacher and other staff to help them to continue to improve the school. I wish you well for the future.