

Helme Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107746
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	324644
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	136
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	Mr Geoff Seward
Headteacher	Mrs M Cardnell
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Helme Meltham Holmfirth West Yorkshire HD9 5RW
Telephone number	01484 222607

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	22–23 April 2009
Inspection number	324644

Fax number

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Almost all of the pupils attending this smaller than average sized school are from White British backgrounds. Pupils attend from the village of Helme and surrounding areas, including areas of social and economic advantage and disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In September 2008 the leadership structure changed and a deputy headteacher was appointed. The school has been accredited with the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and provides good value for money. Outstanding aspects include pupils' personal development and well-being and the way they are cared for, supported and guided. The excellent promotion of community cohesion ensures that pupils develop a particularly secure knowledge of the diversity of communities in Britain and around the world. Pupils behave extremely well, show exemplary attitudes to learning, are articulate and speak very knowledgeably about keeping safe and healthy. They are extremely keen to contribute positively towards their strong school and local communities. These remarkable personal qualities provide a positive platform for improving their academic achievement even further, and prepare them very well to become responsible and confident young citizens of the future. The school enjoys a very good reputation in the locality. Parents are very supportive. They particularly value the school's 'strong moral ethos' and acknowledge that staff 'bring out the very best' in their children.

As a result of good quality teaching and learning and a good curriculum, pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average and in recent years have been rising steadily. In the Year 5/6 class teaching and learning are outstanding and, as a result, pupils make rapid learning gains. Very high expectations, work that is particularly well matched to pupils' varying learning needs and skilled questioning with ongoing opportunities to discuss learning keep all pupils fully engaged throughout their lessons. These best practices are not yet fully embedded in other classes. Nevertheless, sensible adaptations to the curriculum boost pupils' learning where it is needed most. In writing, for example, following a recent whole-school focus, pupils' progress has started to speed up. The curriculum is good. The exciting range of activities offered enable pupils to develop a real joy in learning.

Pupils' good overall academic achievement and their outstanding personal development is the result of good quality leadership, management and governance. The headteacher's passion for ensuring that all pupils achieve well in a very safe, enriching setting is highly evident. The commitment and dedication of all staff make a strong contribution to the school's success. Extensive partnerships beyond school with support agencies, the church, other schools and parents make a significant contribution to pupils' achievements. At present, the task of reviewing the school's performance data rests largely with the headteacher. Her careful analysis pinpoints improvement priorities swiftly and precisely. Improvement actions are subsequently carefully planned and monitored by the headteacher and governors. The contribution of the deputy headteacher has been a significant factor in moving the school forward at an increased pace. Staff welcome her fresh ideas with enthusiasm. The skills of other leaders and managers in evaluating how effective the school is are not yet secure. This limits their ability to contribute fully to improvement planning and self-evaluation processes. Nevertheless, good improvement since the previous inspection is clearly evidenced by rising standards and accelerated progress and there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When children start in the Reception class their skills are broadly typical for their age. Their communication, language and literacy skills are often lower. Children make good progress and achieve well from their starting points. The warm and caring relationships between adults and

children, along with bright, lively indoor and outdoor learning environments ensure that children quickly develop an eagerness to learn. Children's personal, social and emotional development is good because adults help children to understand how to get along well together and to develop their confidence and independence. The high priority given to this aspect of learning stems from effective leadership and management. Staff carefully identify how well children are doing and use this information well to provide good activities that take account of children's varying needs. Because children work directly alongside adults, their learning is purposeful and effective. Opportunities to promote learning in areas where it is needed most, such as writing, are sometimes overlooked when children play independently. Nevertheless, children's learning moves forward at a good rate. By the start of Year 1 almost all children reach the levels expected nationally, with many achieving beyond them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the best teaching practices evident in the Year 5/6 class are fully embedded in all classes to enable all pupils to make rapid gains in their learning.
- Extend the skills of leaders and managers so that they can review the school's performance data, monitor provision and contribute more effectively to school improvement planning and self-evaluation processes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Between Years 1 and 6 pupils achieve well and standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Small numbers of pupils in each year group can lead to variations from year to year in performance in national tests. For example, while in 2008 nationally published assessments for pupils in Year 2 reported average standards, the pupils assessed included a higher than usual proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In recent years standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been rising and pupils' progress has been accelerating. In Year 6 in 2008 while standards in mathematics and science were above average, in English they were broadly average; albeit higher in reading than in writing. The school has identified raising standards in writing as a key priority for improvement and its work is having a positive impact. School data and inspection evidence shows that the gap in standards between reading and writing by Year 6 has started to narrow. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment by Year 6 exceeds the national picture in mathematics, science and English. Although pupils across the school make good progress, learning is particularly rapid in the Year 5/6 class, reflecting outstanding teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Their thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils learn harmoniously together. They are proud to belong to their vibrant school community and are keen to contribute positively to it. They relish opportunities for taking on responsibilities, such as the role of school councillors or befrienders. Older pupils are wonderful role models for younger ones. Pupils say confidently that 'There is no bullying,' and they feel incredibly safe. Pupils' exemplary behaviour represents recent improvement. Consistent application of a clear code of conduct, high expectations and regular celebration of their efforts contribute to an improved picture. Pupils' excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles shows

in their eagerness to take part in many energetic activities, such as 'Get up and go'. From a young age, pupils develop a mutual respect for and a keen awareness of the similarities and cultural differences in people's lives. Links fostered with other schools, both nearby and globally, provide excellent opportunities for pupils to learn alongside one another or over the Internet. Pupils' outstanding personal qualities, along with good progress in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, prepare them extremely well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve well. Thoughtful organisation, very positive relationships, adept use of computerised teaching boards, effective use of praise, and careful and sensitive deployment of highly skilled teaching assistants all make a strong contribution to pupils' good progress. In the Year 5/6 class, however, pupils' progress is outstanding. Here, particularly effective use is made of information showing what pupils can already do to plan precisely their next steps in learning. In addition, a combination of extremely lively and stimulating activities that excite, engage and challenge pupils, particularly skilled questioning that keeps all pupils continually on their toes with regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning together ensure that pupils meet the very high expectations made of them. These very best teaching practices are not as consistently well embedded in other classes. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they have good support to complete work that is matched carefully to their individual learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good-quality curriculum enables pupils to make good progress. A strong emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development and well-being ensures that they achieve well academically. Pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school mirrors a strong commitment to broadening and enriching the curriculum and everyday experiences. Pupils show great enthusiasm, for example in French lessons where learning is exciting, motivating and active. Recent adaptations to the curriculum in writing have resulted in pupils' increased enthusiasm in this subject. Opportunities for writing fire their imaginations, and having more time for writing has resulted in acceleration of pupils' progress. A developing range of good support programmes boosts the progress of pupils working below the level expected for their age and of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good opportunities for challenging the more able pupils, through both day-to-day lessons and the excellent partnerships fostered with the nearby high school, help to ensure that the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment than expected for their age exceeds the national picture.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

In this school, every child really does matter. Pupils' care and welfare are at the very heart of the school and, as a result, exceptionally high-quality pastoral support is evident in day-to-day practice. Parents praise the dedication and commitment of the staff to their children's welfare. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Pupils say that they feel very safe and are

confident there is always someone, adult or peer, on hand to help. Outstanding partnerships with parents and support agencies reflect the school's commitment to helping pupils with social and emotional needs and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Consequently, pupils' progress is accelerating and standards are rising. Contributing to this improving picture is the high expectations of pupils' achievements. There is continual encouragement from all staff to 'just have a go'. Challenging learning targets are set and pupils' progress toward reaching them is monitored closely and regularly. Pupils are clear about how well they are getting on and about what they need to do to reach their learning targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. Making sure that every child can achieve well, within a very caring, safe and enriching setting, is the hallmark of the school's success. This stems from the effective leadership of the headteacher. The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding. Very careful consideration is given to making sure that pupils attending this largely mono-ethnic school learn about culturally, socially and economically diverse communities. In the short time since her appointment the deputy headteacher has made a particularly strong contribution to driving improvements, such as establishing extremely effective behaviour management strategies and developing provision for learning in ICT. Furthermore, her fresh ideas and enthusiasm have created a renewed energy among staff. Governors are well aware of the school's strengths and have an accurate understanding of what is needed to bring about improvement. Careful analysis of the school's performance, particularly by the headteacher, pinpoints improvement priorities swiftly and precisely. As a result, pupils' achievement is boosted where the need is greatest. Actions to gain improvements are well planned and swiftly implemented. However, responsibility for much of this work rests with the headteacher. The skills of other leaders and managers in reviewing school performance data, monitoring the quality of provision and shaping improvement priorities are not yet fully developed.

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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?	1
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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
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?	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/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?	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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 so much for the extremely warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of your wonderful school community. You were all very keen to talk to me and answered all my questions thoughtfully, politely and maturely. Your behaviour has recently got better. It is now excellent. This is because you are so clear about how you should behave. All the adults give you lots of encouragement to grow in confidence and you learn the skills you will need as adults in the future. I particularly enjoyed seeing you playing and learning so happily together with the children visiting from another school. I was particularly impressed with just how much you know from such a young age about the differences and similarities between people all around the world. You are very kind and caring towards one another, too. You get lots of chances to take part in exciting activities. You were clearly having great fun when I came to watch the Class 3 French lesson. I was impressed with your knowledge of the subject. It was easy to see why you enjoy school so very much.

Your parents told me how pleased they are with your school. I agree with them that you go to a good school. By Year 6 you reach standards that are above those expected. The rate at which you learn is also faster than expected and, it is very fast in the Year 5/6 class (Class 5). These high standards and your fabulous attitudes to learning are the reasons why you are so well prepared for going to secondary school. Even though the adults who work at your school know that you do well in your learning, they still search for ways to improve your school, so that it continues to get better all the time. This is why I have asked the school to make sure that:

- pupils in Classes 1 to 4 learn as quickly as those in the Year 5/6 class (Class 5)
- adults who are responsible for checking how well the school is doing learn how they can find out where and how things might get even better for you.

You can help by making sure that you always check what you still have to do to reach your learning targets, and by continuing to try your best in everything you do.