

Highfield Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112667
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325657
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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)	306
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 Stuart Yeowart
Headteacher	Mr Gary Martin
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Highfield Lane Chesterfield Derbyshire S41 8AZ
Telephone number	01246 273534
Fax number	01246 554120

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2009
Inspection number	325657

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Highfield Hall is a larger than average sized school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including pupils with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly in line with that found nationally. Although most pupils are from White British backgrounds, other ethnic minority groups are represented in school and a small proportion of these are at an early stage of acquiring English. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is provided for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has gained Activemark for its commitment to pupils' health and fitness.

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 that has improved well since the last inspection. The headteacher has raised expectations to a high level and has brought staff, pupils and governors with him. There is a well-embedded vision to build on the school's many strengths and make Highfield Hall an even more vibrant and exciting place to learn. The school's track record of improvement suggests that the school is well placed to achieve this vision. Many parents speak well of the school and a comment made by one summed up that of others, 'My children love school and I feel they are making such good progress.'

Standards have been on an upward trend over the last few years, and test and assessment results for Year 2 and 6 pupils in 2008 were the school's best in recent years. The results showed a picture of above average standards overall and, for Year 2 pupils, exceptionally high standards in writing. From broadly average starting points, these results clearly demonstrate good achievement for all pupils. A strength of the school is that it is never content to rest on its laurels and instead always wants to do better. With this in mind, it has rightly identified the need for a greater percentage of older pupils to attain higher levels in writing because at present not enough do so. The good progress that pupils make owes much to the good quality of teaching across the school. Most lessons are characterised by tasks that challenge, motivate and enthuse the pupils in equal measure.

Pupils make a telling contribution to making the school what it is. They are well behaved and forthcoming and clearly love coming to school, although this is not always reflected in the broadly average attendance rates. Pupils contribute much to making the school a cohesive community and have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and manage risks in their lives. They leave the school as well-rounded individuals who are up for the next challenges in their educational lives. The vibrant curriculum on offer provides a wide array of learning opportunities both within and outside of the classroom that enthuse the pupils and help them to achieve well. In its quest for excellence the school has already instigated plans to provide more cross-curricular writing opportunities for older pupils and to ensure that best use is made of outdoor spaces in the EYFS to accelerate children's learning and progress. All staff play their part to the full in ensuring that good pastoral care and academic guidance are an integral feature of school life. As a result, pupils feel valued and respected and have a good awareness of their personal academic targets.

Good leadership and management lie at the core of the school. The very good leadership of the headteacher has played a pivotal role in continuously moving the school forward at a good pace. He is supported by a very effective deputy headteacher and a committed staff and governors who are on a mission to take the school on to the next level. Evidence suggests that this quest is in safe and accomplished hands.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children come into the Nursery with skills that are, overall, at an expected level for their age, although the school's data indicate that attainment on entry in speech, language and communication is declining. All children achieve well and by the end of the Reception standards are a little above the expected level. Good provision and teaching mean children are encouraged to be independent and, as their confidence and self-esteem grows, to contribute to the learning

process. As soon as children start, parents and carers are encouraged to participate in their education. The range of activities provided in the Nursery engages and motivates the children and helps them to learn at a good pace. This continues in the Reception Year where enthusiastic teaching means the pace of learning is maintained and children enjoy the range of activities offered. Behaviour is good; children play well together, working hard to develop their ideas and make discoveries. Assessment procedures are good. Children's welfare is promoted effectively and they are provided with lots of healthy snacks and drinks. Although there are outdoor spaces designated for the EYFS, these are not yet utilised to their full potential to help accelerate progress. However, leaders and managers demonstrate a strong awareness of what needs to be done to enhance the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the number of Year 6 pupils attaining higher writing levels through well planned, relevant and exciting writing tasks in different subjects and curriculum projects.
- Develop and make best use of the outdoor play areas in the EYFS to provide a vibrant array of learning opportunities that further enhance children's learning and progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement for all pupils is good and a trend of improving standards is now well embedded. Children get off to a good start in the EYFS and this continues in Years 1 and 2. Standards in the 2008 assessments for Year 2 pupils were well above the national average and exceptionally high in writing, demonstrating good, and for writing, excellent progress, given pupils' starting points. The unvalidated 2008 test data for Year 6 pupils show standards to be above average in English, mathematics and science. The number of pupils reaching Level 5 in writing was below the national average. This group of pupils attained average standards overall at the end of Year 2 and so made good progress. Test and assessment data and rigorous scrutiny of pupils' present work confirm that progress across the school is consistently good with the school rightly focusing on improving writing for the older pupils. Boys achieve as well as girls. This is due to good teaching, rigorous assessment and tracking, the setting of challenging targets and management that holds teachers accountable for the progress of their pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly, chatty and forthcoming. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and see the benefit of taking exercise. They enjoy school, know how to keep themselves safe and are aware of the possible dangers of the internet. The school council, playground buddies, house captains and supporting younger children all provide opportunities for the pupils to make a telling contribution to the life of the school. They carry out these roles, together with participation in community events and happenings, with gusto, enthusiasm and maturity. Behaviour in the school is good and often better, although some pupils are a little lacking in self-discipline and others lack the confidence to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, particularly in respecting each other's feelings and beliefs and in recognising the importance of a sense of community. As one pupil said, 'Everyone is made to feel part of our school and that's what counts.' Attendance is satisfactory. The majority of pupils come to school regularly but there are a few families that find this difficult. The school strives tirelessly to ensure attendance is

taken seriously by parents and follows up all absences rigorously. Pupils' good personal development helps them make the most of their participation in innovative projects with local banks which enhance their financial acumen and help them prepare well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good progress and achievement are often the result of good teaching and this is certainly the case at Highfield Hall. Most lessons move along at a cracking pace, with teachers setting work that is well matched to the differing abilities of the pupils and placing a good emphasis on pupils' learning through problem solving and practical tasks. Across the school, pupils are managed effectively, teaching assistants support pupils well and the quality of relationships helps to create a very positive learning environment. In the best lessons pupils are encouraged to take risks and to take responsibility for their own learning while incisive, open-ended questioning takes learning to a higher level. There are, however, occasions when such factors are not present or lessons are dominated by over long introductions or too much teacher talk. There are some very good examples of marking which make clear to pupils why a piece of work is good, or what they need to do to improve, but this practice is not yet consistently applied.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well balanced and offers a wealth of opportunities for pupils to be creative and active. For example, during the inspection the pupils found a 'space workshop' enjoyable and fun and it helped them to develop their scientific skills. Although literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well, the school has introduced plans to develop higher level writing skills in subjects and curriculum projects in Years 3 to 6. These strategies have not been in place long enough to increase significantly the number of pupils reaching Level 5, but shoots of success are coming through. The provision for personal, social and health education is good and reflects the school's ethos in valuing individual pupils and encouraging them to be respectful and considerate of others. Enrichment is good: there is a wide array of visits, visitors and clubs, from Latin to choir, from circus skills to owl handlers. Add to these opportunities to learn Spanish, French and to play a musical instrument and it is easy to see why pupils enjoy their time at school and achieve well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a school where the individuality of pupils is recognised and celebrated and the well-being of pupils is given a high priority. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that the social and emotional needs of pupils are quickly identified and accommodated. Good provision is made for pupils experiencing learning or behavioural difficulties through both the school's own internal mechanisms and the good links with outside support agencies. These factors, together with pupils' confidence that bullying is rare and that they are given a genuine voice in school, provide a winning combination in helping them feel valued and respected. Safeguarding procedures are in line with requirements. Academic guidance is good: pupils have a good awareness of their individual academic targets and older pupils know the National Curriculum levels they are working towards. Pupils are not yet consistently involved in setting and reviewing their own

targets but the school has identified this as the next step in further strengthening the impact of academic guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very strong, effective and focused leadership. He and the deputy headteacher have been the driving force behind improving the school since the last inspection. Staff share a commitment to take the school to the next level, helped in no small measure by the headteacher's challenge to continually set the bar of expectation higher. The reorganisation of senior and middle management teams has had a positive impact on providing robust strategies for monitoring teaching, learning and achievement. Plans are rightly in hand to strengthen the role played by middle managers in observing lessons and analysing assessment data. The school's self-evaluation is spot on and identified areas of weakness are tackled with rigour, innovation and speed. The school works hard at reaching out to and involving the local community, and strives to engage all parents in their children's education. Governance is good. Although a small minority of governors do not yet fully understand their role as 'critical friends' in holding the school to account, all are very supportive, know the school well and want it to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

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?	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?	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	2
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

14 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfield Hall Primary School, Chesterfield, S41 8AZ

You will probably remember that we visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what we found out. But, before I do, I would just like to say 'thank you' for making us feel welcome and for being so ready to share your thoughts about Highfield Hall. We had a chance to talk to quite a lot of you and I have told your teachers how you were so helpful and polite. It was good to hear how much you enjoy school, that bullying is not an issue and that you feel you have a voice that is listened to.

We found that staff care for you well and make learning enjoyable through the different subjects that are covered as well as the clubs and other activities. Good teaching helps you to make good progress and achieve well. The school is good at helping you keep fit, safe and healthy. Mr Martin is a very good headteacher and, together with all the staff and governors, wants to make the school an even better place to learn. I know that you want the same and you are certainly playing your part by your good behaviour, your enjoyment of school and the way in which you respect and help one another. Well done!

We have talked to your teachers about how they can help make the school an even more exciting place to learn. Firstly, they are going to provide more opportunities for older pupils to improve their writing across different subjects and other curriculum projects, and secondly, they are going to improve and make better use of the outdoor play areas for the youngest children.

The staff and governors want the school to improve. I know you will want to play your part by continuing to work hard and behave well. We wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Yours sincerely

Martin Newell

Lead inspector