

High Wych Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117398
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326599
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Marina Gough

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 controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	198
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 Alan Ashworth
Headteacher	Mrs Mandy West
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	High Wych Sawbridgeworth Hertfordshire CM21 0JB
Telephone number	01279 722109

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2009
Inspection number	326599

Fax number

01279 600396

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	2-3 March 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the local area and, because of its popularity, draws pupils from the neighbouring county. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage when they are three, and attend part-time for their first year. Their attainment when they start school is broadly in line with what is expected for this age. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average, as is the number of pupils who have learning difficulties. The range of learning difficulties includes autistic spectrum disorder and language difficulties. The school has achieved a range of awards including the Healthy Schools Award, Becta Mark (for information and communication technology), Eco Bronze and Silver Award, Sports Activemark and Gold Travel Plan Certificate. It is currently working towards the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the International Award. The school hosts a privately run after school club each afternoon.

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 an effective school characterised by a warm and friendly atmosphere, reflecting a very positive ethos. It has made good progress since its previous inspection despite some real challenges in recruiting teaching staff. Because of the unrelenting efforts of the headteacher and the governing body, staffing issues have now been very successfully resolved. Consequently, the school is now entering a period of consolidation and renewed development. This difficult period naturally concerned parents but the vast majority appreciate the efforts the school made to minimise the disruption caused and are happy that the staffing is now stable. The inspection findings closely reflect the school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, and show that the school knows itself well. The school is well placed for the next steps in its development.

Children progress well as they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage so that by the time they transfer to Year 1 their attainment is above the level expected for their age. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 2, their attainment in mathematics is above average and in reading and writing is well above average. In Key Stage 2 there is a more mixed picture of achievement, although it is good overall. Because of staffing difficulties in the past, there are gaps in the learning of the oldest pupils. The school has identified these and they are being addressed. Consequently, these pupils are now making rapid progress and pupils in Year 6 are on course to attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science in the end of the year. However, while most pupils have very secure number skills in mathematics, their understanding of weight, length and capacity within a real life context is weak.

The pupils are exceptionally enthusiastic about their learning and take an active part in all activities. They are well behaved, friendly and polite. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe and understand their individual and collective role within the community of the school. Teaching is good, lively and interesting and takes good account of the pupils' previous learning. Teachers go to great lengths to make activities interesting for the pupils. The curriculum is imaginative and broad and is well enhanced by a good range of additional learning opportunities. The school cares for its pupils very well and has good systems in place to ensure their health, well-being and safety. Pupils with learning difficulties receive good levels of extra support so that they are able to achieve well.

The headteacher provides effective leadership and has done much to keep morale of staff high and to engender a real team spirit over the last few years. Governors are supportive and hard-working and take a proactive role in the strategic management of the school. However, there are some shortcomings in terms of the Early Years Foundation Stage outside play area that governors have not yet addressed. A small but significant number of parents lack confidence in the leadership and management of the school. The inspection findings do not support any of the concerns this group of parents has raised and confirm the view of the majority of parents that leadership and management are good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage children is outstanding. Of particular note is the curriculum which provides a superb balance between highly focused activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children themselves. Children benefit from learning in a

vibrant and stimulating environment where activities closely meet their developmental needs. Teaching is exciting and challenging and children enjoy the additional support of a dedicated and sensitive team of assistants and nursery nurses. The outside play area is a good facility that provides a real extension to indoor learning. However, there is still more to be done in terms of linking indoor and outdoor play activities. Extensive use is made of the local area to support the children's learning and to broaden their experience of the local community. Levels of care and guidance are good and relationships between parents/carers and staff are very positive. As a result, children are happy to come to school and to leave their carers at the start of the day. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well by an enthusiastic and experienced coordinator. She is aware that the current gender imbalance in the Reception class could cause some difficulties as this class moves through the school and is documenting the impact this is having in terms of curriculum planning, relationships and resourcing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of measure within a real life, practical context.
- The governors should accelerate their plans to address the issues raised during the inspection in relation to the outside play area for the Early Years Foundation Stage children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been consistently above or well above the national average for the past few years in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils throughout the key stage achieve well. Standards in Year 6 are generally above the national average in English, mathematics and science, and for the current Year 6, the school's own data indicates that their attainment is likely to be even higher. Following a real thrust on developing writing across the school, standards have risen well. The school is now rightly focusing its attention on improving standards in mathematics still further, and recognises that pupils' knowledge of measure within real life contexts is a weaker aspect of their learning. Key Stage 2 pupils achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are most able benefit from the additional levels of support they receive and make good progress.

Throughout the school, there is a strong emphasis placed on information and communication technology (ICT) and standards in this subject are above the national expectations. The quality of art work displayed around the school is of a very high standard and is creative, imaginative and strikingly displayed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils work and play well together. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Harmonious relationships contribute much to pupils' good rates of academic progress. Pupils know right from wrong and behaviour in class and around the building is good. While most elements of cultural development are strong, pupils lack direct opportunities to understand and experience Britain's rich ethnic diversity. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and agree that it is a particularly happy place to be. Attendance is good. Pupils speak knowledgeably about how to keep fit and healthy and are very proud of their allotment. They are delighted that the headteacher and staff take this project very seriously, encouraging them to prepare and eat the produce. Pupils believe that the adults in school have their best interests at heart.

This contributes to their good sense of well-being and security. Pupils help their school to run smoothly by contributing their ideas confidently through their school and Eco councils. Their businesslike approach in these situations, added to their good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, means that they are well prepared for the future. Pupils of all ages understand the notion of the school community and that their individual actions impact on the well-being and happiness of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school and some lessons observed had outstanding features, such as lively pace, the use of well chosen resources and the levels of challenge for the most able pupils. Teachers plan well so that activities build on what the pupils already know and can do. They put a lot of effort into making lessons exciting and stimulating and as a result, pupils really enjoy their learning and are keen to succeed. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils mean that the pupils are unafraid of making mistakes or seeking clarification if they do not understand an aspect of their learning. Pupils of all abilities make a good contribution in class and apply themselves well to the tasks they are given. Occasionally, they become a little restless where introductory discussions are a little too long, but in the main, they are responsive and open to new challenges. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are the most able benefit from additional support in small groups enabling their specific needs to be fully met. Teaching assistants are well trained and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has developed its curriculum very well since the last inspection and provides an exciting and well balanced range of daily activities for all age groups. The long morning sessions are used extremely well and are carefully designed so that pupils' learning is varied. Very focused lessons such as literacy and numeracy are often either side of active lessons such as physical education, or lessons pupils find particularly enjoyable such as art. As a result of the good amount of time given to subjects such as ICT and art, pupils achieve particularly well in these areas. Additional time has been devoted to writing which is one of the school's targets for development. However, there is no similar pocket of time allocated to addressing weaker aspects of mathematics such as practical work on measure to improve pupils' understanding. The school provides a good range of additional learning opportunities and the residential trip is very popular. Visits within the local area do much to strengthen the pupils' understanding of the community in which they live.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know their pupils well and are very aware of their pastoral needs. For example, 'problem boxes' are available in classes for older pupils so they can post any concerns or worries that they might have. A good system is in place to follow up anything that arises during good quality personal, social and health education lessons. Safeguarding and procedures for child protection meet requirements. Academically, pupils are guided effectively. Work is marked regularly, and where marking is most effective, pupils get good guidance about how they can improve their

performance further. Systems to track pupils' achievements are good, but are not yet fully embedded and so are not yet having an optimum impact. The school provides good additional support for pupils who have learning difficulties and a strength of the provision is the 'child-friendly' individual education plans, which show pupils clearly the targets they are working towards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and other leaders check and evaluate the school's performance effectively and have a good and accurate appreciation of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. Good procedures are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and to assess pupils' work. Any matters for improvement that arise are then addressed through a good programme of professional development and training. The headteacher and governors have drawn up very good procedures to induct and support incoming staff. This has done much to improve any adverse effects of high staff mobility in the past few years. Together with the headteacher, governors have introduced interviews with leaving staff to ascertain what they should put into place to improve staff retention. The staff are working well together as a team and the impact of their good efforts is having a positive effect on the quality of education provided. The headteacher and governors do much to seek the views of parents and the vast majority of parents are extremely pleased with the quality of education the school provides. The school works well within its local community and is satisfactorily developing links within the wider community.

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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?	3
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?	1
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?	1
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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
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**

4 March 2009

Dear pupils

Inspection of High Wych CofE Primary School, CM21 0JB

I am writing to let you know what we found out about your school when we visited a short time ago. We were pleased to see how friendly the school is and you told us that you really enjoy coming to school. You work hard in lessons because your teachers make activities exciting, and you do especially well in information and communication technology and art lessons, which you particularly enjoy.

All of you make good progress, and by the time you leave school at the end of Year 6, the standards you attain in English, mathematics and science are better than those found in most other schools. However, although your number skills are very good, most of you struggle to understand measurements of length, weight and capacity and we have asked your teachers to give you more practice of using these measurements to improve your understanding.

You get on very well with the adults in the school and know that you can go to any member of staff if you have a concern. We thought the problem box was a very good idea. It was a real pleasure to talk to members of the school and Eco councils about the work that goes on in school. We very much like the idea of you growing your own vegetables and then eating them. The school has worked hard to make sure your days are varied, and we were pleased to hear that you like the French and Spanish lessons.

Your headteacher and governors run the school well and know what they need to do to make it even better. They have your best interests at heart and have worked well to get new teachers in place of those who have left over the past couple of years. They look after the building well so it is safe for you, and we have asked them to make sure they complete their plans to make the outside play area for the Early Years Foundation Stage children more suitable for their needs.

Best wishes

Marina Gough

Lead inspector