

Huntingtower Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120377
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327265
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	275
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 Diane Coleman
Headteacher	Mr Mark Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Huntingtower Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 7AU

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	10–11 December 2008
Inspection number	327265

Telephone number
Fax number

01476 564291
01476 400102

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average size school serving a socially mixed area of Grantham. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, though there are a small and growing proportion of pupils from different ethnic groups and at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than that normally found, though the number with a statement of special educational needs is relatively high. A greater number than usual start and leave the school other than at the usual times. Pupils start the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with levels of knowledge and skills, which are below those normally expected. They often have particularly low early literacy skills. There has been a period of considerable staff turbulence over recent years, including a significant period without a substantive headteacher. The current headteacher took over in September 2008. The school has been recognised as a Healthy School.

Breakfast and after-school childcare is provided on the school site. The governing body of the school does not manage this facility.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

At the time of its last inspection, the school was judged to require significant improvement. A new leadership team, in partnership with governors, parents, pupils and the local authority, have ensured that improvements since then have been so significant that the school now provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education for its pupils. In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Leaders have demonstrated that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve in the future. A key to this success has been the headteacher. In a short time he has brought back a sense of pride, confidence and high aspirations among all members of the school community. Everyone is united behind his vision for the future. As he said when talking about future priorities: 'Now we have just got to do everything better and better.' This is a particularly apt description of where the school is on its improvement journey. The headteacher has laid the foundations for future success by creating a welcoming school where everyone feels valued and by establishing a common sense of purpose within the staff. The result is that pupils enjoy learning, work hard and behave well in lessons and around the school. They have the right attitudes towards learning because teachers have developed good relationships with them. Standards, though below average, are rising and achievement, while satisfactory overall, shows signs of improvement. This is because rigour has been brought to checking on the work of the school, including how well pupils are doing, and actions for improvement are now promptly put in place. There is also more good teaching now, enabling more children to make good progress, but a significant proportion of teaching remains satisfactory. There is still work to be done to raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly by accelerating the progress of the more able in writing and by closing the gaps in learning identified in mathematics. Attendance is satisfactory. Parents confirm that they and their children like school. One wrote astutely: 'The new headteacher has made a positive difference to the school. He has invigorated and stimulated both pupils and staff. While progress still needs to be made, the overall progress has been excellent.'

Staff are gradually making changes to the way they plan and deliver learning activities to try to make them more interesting and relevant. These developments are recent and not yet embedded across school and their impact on pupils' learning has yet to be evaluated. A good range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, and the effective use of visits and visitors, enhance learning and contribute well to pupils' personal and social development, which is good. Pastoral care is a particular strength and results in pupils feeling safe and well looked-after. The school has introduced more accurate systems for checking how well pupils are doing and setting targets for improvement. Leaders are working hard to make the best use possible of the information collected. The next step is to ensure that everyone in school recognises and fulfils their role so that leaders and managers at all levels can play their full part in driving forward school improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the EYFS is satisfactory. Children are below the level expected of them when they join and while some achieve the goals expected by the end of Reception, others are still working towards them, representing satisfactory progress. Because provision to promote children's

welfare is good, children are happy and feel safe and secure. This means that they are able to access resources and equipment independently, replace items when they have finished and approach adults confidently when they need help. The system for 'snack' also allows them to take responsibility for themselves and the children manage this well. There is a balance of play-based and adult-led activities. During the adult-led activities, children are taught specific skills and understanding, such as how to create and extend repeating patterns. However, staff do not yet make best use of children's play to extend learning in purposeful ways and, as a consequence, progress slows. The outdoor space has been considerably improved recently and adds significantly to the children's experience; it supports their development in all curricular areas. Children enjoy a good variety of creative and practical resources and use the space safely and sensibly. During a time of staffing changes, satisfactory leadership has ensured that teamwork has continued to be effective. Staff plan together, all take responsibility for collecting assessment information and review provision on a regular basis. They are developing assessment systems to enable them to track children's progress more effectively but these are not yet sufficiently robust and embedded to have had a measurable impact.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by accelerating the progress of higher attaining pupils in writing and closing the gaps in learning in mathematics.
- Ensure that all staff consistently apply the best features of teaching and learning seen.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels play their full part in driving forward school improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter Year 1 with levels of knowledge and skills that are below those normally expected. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. In teacher-assessed tests at the end of Year 2 in 2008, standards were below average in reading and writing but slightly above average in mathematics. Swift action has been taken to improve teaching and learning in literacy and evidence in school suggests that progress is quickening and standards in reading and writing are beginning to rise. Standards attained at the end of Year 6 declined in 2007 and 2008, attributed by the school to considerable staff changes which resulted in the under-achievement of some pupils in Years 3 to 6. However, new leadership has swiftly introduced more rigorous systems for assessing and tracking children's progress, ensuring that any underachievement is precisely pinpointed and addressed, particularly in aspects of English and mathematics. Whilst these arrangements may have come too late for the oldest pupils to catch up with standards expected nationally, they have halted the decline in standards and in pupils' progress. Pupils' progress is now at least satisfactory. Those who find their learning more difficult or who are in the early stages of learning English are supported suitably, and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident and enthusiastic learners who behave well. Pupils enjoy school because, as one explained, 'learning is fun'. They have a good sense of right and wrong and in lessons

and play areas, treat each other well and look out for each other. They enjoy having responsibilities, including being members of their class and school council. Pupils have a good awareness of what is needed to keep safe, fit and healthy, including the preparation of a healthy choice on the school menu from the 'Let's Get Cooking' club. They feel safe at school and understand, for example, the importance of safe use of the Internet. Pupils become familiar with the principles of democracy by electing their school councillors, who contribute very well to their school community. Although there are links with a village in Thailand, generally their knowledge and understanding of other countries and cultures, and their involvement in the local community, are less well developed. They are more than ready and able to contribute as much as they can. Bearing in mind both their personal and academic development, they leave the school satisfactorily prepared for the next challenges in their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Adults now share high expectations of pupils. They form warm and respectful relationships with pupils and consistently apply the effective behaviour management routines. As a result, the pupils themselves have high aspirations, demonstrate good attitudes to their work and behave and cooperate together well. A new shared framework for planning, along with more accurate use of assessment, is ensuring that teachers are planning work more closely to meet pupils' needs and that pupils are clearer about what they need to do. Teachers work hard to plan activities which engage interest, particularly through the use of information and communication technology. However, too many inconsistencies remain. For example, sometimes teachers talk for too long and pupils do not have enough time to put their learning into practice. Opportunities are missed to challenge pupils' thinking and accelerate learning through the use of open-ended and more probing questions. Some adults are not active and enthusiastic enough in how they engage with pupils and additional adults are not always deployed effectively enough to really make the most of the learning opportunities offered.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum places a suitable emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills and interesting and enjoyable enrichment activities that keep pupils well motivated. There is a good take-up of the wide range of clubs on offer because there is something to appeal to everyone, including opportunities that develop pupils' creative, sporting and useful life skills. The well thought-out programme of personal, social and health education supports pupils' good personal development and well-being. Outside visits, including a popular residential, and visitors to school, such as from the police and the fire services, add much to pupils' experiences. Links are beginning to be made between subjects by using topic themes, which pupils say makes their learning more memorable. This approach is being developed steadily, in order to make sure that the curriculum closely matches the needs of the pupils, and that staff have the skills and confidence to apply it effectively. However, it is in the early stages. Consequently, it does not yet ensure that the more able pupils are always challenged to do as well as they could. Neither is there detailed planning aimed at developing pupils' understanding of national and global issues.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral element of care is good and involves rigorous procedures to ensure pupils' safety, health and welfare. Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safeguarded meet requirements. A strong feature of the ethos of the school is that all adults and other agency partners work hard to make sure that pupils enjoy their learning, feel valued and successful, and that everyone is included in all that the school has to offer. This successfully helps to ensure that pupils' personal development and well-being is good. Individuals and groups are supported effectively through specially tailored programmes, delivered by teaching assistants, to ensure that any additional needs are catered for. However, opportunities are occasionally missed within classrooms to make the most of the learning opportunities that additional adults can offer. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Systems to guide pupils and to track their progress are new and staff have yet to apply them consistently and rigorously across school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The recent history of turbulence in leadership and management contributed to a decline in achievement and standards and resulted in the school requiring significant improvement at the time of the last inspection. However, as staff, parents and pupils alike are only too keen to report, the arrival of the new headteacher has brought a transformation. Staffing has stabilised and positivity and improvement are clearly the rule. The new rigour to self-evaluation has ensured that everyone shares a more accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and once again there is a clear strategic direction for the school's work including sensible action plans and timelines for their completion. Furthermore, capable senior leaders, their role previously undeveloped, describe themselves as 'chomping at the bit' to accelerate school improvement further. They have put in place more effective systems for assessment and checking on pupils' progress that have resulted in more challenging targets being set and increasingly achieved. The school is set on the road to improvement. Governors are working satisfactorily in partnership with the school. Many other leaders are newly in post and their impact has yet to be felt. A focus for the new headteacher has, quite rightly, been uniting, strengthening and giving pride back to the school community. Plans have yet to be developed to more effectively promote community cohesion within and beyond the immediate school community. Senior leaders recognise that the next step is for all in school to recognise the part that they have to play in accelerating school improvement.

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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?	3
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?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	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?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

12 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Huntingtower Community Primary School, Grantham, NG31 7AU.

Thank you for making us welcome when we came to inspect your school a little while ago. This letter is to tell you what we found about your school.

Your school has improved a lot since the last time that it was inspected. Staff with leadership responsibilities have a much better idea about how good the school is and how to make it even better for you, as quickly as possible. There are some good things about your school. For example, your behaviour is good and you work hard in lessons. The adults in school take good care of you and help you if you are worried. You enjoy school and say your lessons are interesting. Some lessons are good and you learn a lot. Your standards in English and mathematics are below those in most schools but you make similar progress to most pupils and there are signs that things are improving. The headteacher, governors and staff are really keen to help you to learn even better and these are some things that we have asked them to do.

- Make sure that you reach even higher standards in English and mathematics. This is especially important for those of you who are good at writing and where some of you have gaps in your learning in mathematics.
- Make sure that all of your lessons are as good as the best ones that we saw.
- Make sure that everyone at school plays their part in helping it to get better as quickly as possible.

You can help your school to improve by continuing to behave as well and work as hard as you do now and by coming to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector