

Horncastle Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120507
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327298
Inspection date	19 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)	540
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 Rachel Bourn
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Craven
Date of previous school inspection	15 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bowl Alley Lane Horncastle Lincolnshire LN9 5EH

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	19 January 2009
Inspection number	327298

Telephone number
Fax number

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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the school's assessment, tracking and target setting systems; the quality and impact of the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and how well good teaching and learning practice is disseminated to bring about further improvements. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, sampling of pupils' work, scrutiny of school documentation, assessment, tracking and target setting data and information and discussions with the headteacher, pupils, key staff, governors and the local authority.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Horncastle is a much larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below 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 the picture found nationally. These pupils have, for example, mainly moderate learning difficulties or autism. Although most pupils are from White British backgrounds, other minority ethnic groups are represented in school and a small percentage of these pupils are at an early stage of acquiring English.

EYFS provision is provided for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. A private provider has very recently provided childcare provision on site. This is available after school on a daily basis, although at present no EYFS children are on roll. The school received an Ofsted outstanding school award in 2006, Healthy School award in 2006 and Activemark and Sportsmark awards in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Horncastle is an outstanding school that fully deserves the reputation it holds within the local community and beyond. Parents greatly value and appreciate the quality of education provided and many wrote glowing comments. One comment echoed by many others sums up parental feelings about the school, 'An exceptionally well run school with fantastic staff. I feel extremely lucky to have been able to send my children to this school.' This is a school that is not complacent in any manner and constantly strives and succeeds in setting the bar of expectation higher. This drive and commitment help to explain why it has an excellent track record of continuous and sustained improvement and lays down a marker to show that the quest towards more success is in accomplished hands.

Although this is a large school, there is a tangible sense of family and community cohesion that permeates the building. The school does much to reach out to parents and the local community but is quick to instil in pupils a sense of belonging to a wider community. It does this through its excellent work that broadens pupils' horizons about different cultures, traditions and beliefs while highlighting how they can make a telling contribution to the lives of others through fundraising, caring for the environment and being a good young citizen. Pupils respond with great maturity, respect and empathy.

Attainment when children start at the school is a little below national expectations, with children's communication, language and creative skills being lower. Outstanding teaching across the school results in standards when pupils leave the school being significantly above the national average, as they have been for a number of years, and in some years standards in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science are exceptionally high. This represents outstanding progress and achievement for pupils of all abilities and ethnicities, given their starting points. Scrutiny of pupils' work and standards during the inspection suggests this trend is set to continue. The school keeps a very close eye on how well pupils are progressing, through its excellent assessment and tracking procedures. The information gleaned from these procedures is used in a highly effective manner to set challenging targets for all pupils.

Any pupil falling behind is quickly spotted and additional support provided. Individual teachers being held accountable for the progress of pupils in their class strengthen this position further. If one adds into the mix the role played by pupils through an awareness of their individual targets and the readiness to act upon the pointers for improvement in the high quality marking, it is crystal clear why academic guidance is a significant strength of the school and is outstanding. This is matched by the quality of pastoral care. Pupils feel very safe, highly valued and respected and are confident that their individuality is both recognised and celebrated. They have a voice that is listened to and acted upon: no better illustrated than by the many suggestions for improvements made through the school council that come to fruition. All these factors merge together seamlessly to help pupils leave school as very well rounded individuals who are more than ready to face the challenges the future holds for them.

The high standards, and accelerated progress that pupils make, owes much to the teaching. Relationships across the school are outstanding and many lessons have a buzz of interest and excitement. Teachers have different teaching styles and strengths but the outcomes are often the same - learning that is challenging, packed with pace and high expectations and tasks that keep pupils on their toes from start to finish. Across the school, writing skills are taught very well and many opportunities are provided for pupils to learn through practical, problem solving

and investigative tasks. Teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards to help bring learning to life and teaching assistants play their part to the full in supporting pupils who find learning more difficult. Pupils' love of school is certainly enhanced by the rich and vibrant curriculum. Their literacy, numeracy and computer skills are developed rigorously and systematically. However, the school adds another layer of success by providing a plethora of high quality opportunities to enhance these skills across different subjects. This helps to give real meaning and purpose to learning and is a bedrock of the school's success. Add to this the many sporting activities and tournaments that the pupils participate in, the school's commitment to healthy lifestyle, the opportunities to play musical instruments, to learn a modern foreign language, the visits and visitors and the clubs, including drama, photography and choir, and the recipe for an outstanding curriculum is complete.

There is little doubt that pupils' outstanding personal development helps Horncastle to be the success story that it is. They are tremendous ambassadors for the school. This is evident through their excellent behaviour, their desire to do well and a contagious enthusiasm. They are adamant that bullying is not an issue. Pupils are invariably extremely polite, courteous individuals who are eager to talk about how much they love coming to school and to talk about their work. They take a real pride in what they do and this is demonstrated in the excellent way they present their work. Attendance rates are above the national average. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what is needed to lead healthy and safe lives, including the possible dangers of using the internet. They relish the opportunities to take on responsibility through the school council, peer mediators, fundraising as well as many jobs around the school. They participate in community events with great enthusiasm.

Highly successful schools often benefit from exceptional leadership and management and Horncastle is no exception. The inspirational headteacher has led a continuous and successful quest for sustained excellence. He has gained the full respect of staff, pupils and parents on this journey. He has ensured high standards and instilled rigour in how the quality of teaching is monitored and performance data evaluated but has never lost sight of the vision to make this a fun and exciting place to learn and work. He is supported in his work by an excellent leadership team and together they identify and tackle any weaknesses robustly and are very effective at making improvements stick. They have rightly identified the necessity to establish more regular and formal opportunities to disseminate the excellent examples of teaching and learning in order to impact more on pupils' achievement. The quality of leadership is completed by high calibre governance, which supports and challenges the school in equal measure and plays its part to the full in providing a first class quality of education for the children of the Horncastle community.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children get off to a flying start in the EYFS and by the end of the Reception Year standards are a little above national expectations. The outstanding achievement owes much to the excellent teaching and an exciting curriculum. Provision is very stimulating and provides many opportunities for children to learn through 'hands on' activities. Alongside this, key skills are directly taught in an outstanding manner. Excellent provision is made for children's personal development and it is no coincidence that this results in them being outstandingly well behaved and in their confidence as independent learners growing daily. Already children have a good awareness of eating healthily. All staff work together extremely well and assessment is outstanding at building up a very accurate picture of what children can and cannot do. The

information is recorded in an exemplary manner and is constantly used to guide and inform future planning. The excellent induction procedures help children to settle quickly into school routines. Add to this the high quality levels of ongoing pastoral care and it is easy to see why children feel safe and secure and why they enjoy their learning so much. Leadership is excellent. There is no resting on their laurels and staff are always seeking to make things better. With this in mind, plans have rightly been drawn up to improve the outdoor provision so that learning can be taken to an even higher level. The links that are established with parents, other settings and support agencies start here in the EYFS and are then maintained throughout the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide regular and formal opportunities and strategies for excellent examples of teaching and learning to be better shared among all staff.
- Instigate and embed the plans for improving outdoor provision in the EYFS in order to have the best possible impact on children's learning.

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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?	1
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	1

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?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

20 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Horncastle Community Primary School, Horncastle, LN9 5EH

Many thanks to you all for making our visit to your school so enjoyable and worthwhile and one that we will remember for a long time. We greatly appreciated the opportunities to talk to you about work and school, and a special thanks to the Year 6 pupils and the school council who met with us to discuss their views. It was great to hear how much you love school and all the terrific activities you take part in both during and outside of the school day. It was good to hear how safe and secure you feel, that bullying is not an issue and that there is always someone to talk to if you have any concerns.

I found so many good things about Horncastle School that I have to agree with you and say that it is an outstanding school and a great and fun place to learn. Teachers and other staff make learning exciting and in doing so help you achieve exceptionally well. The curriculum is exciting, with many interesting activities on offer and lots of visits, visitors and after-school clubs. The school is excellent at helping you keep safe, fit and healthy and the way that it cares for you is outstanding. Mr Craven is a terrific headteacher and the teachers, staff and governors are a premiership team in providing a high quality of education for all of you.

There is another fantastic strength that I have not mentioned yet and that is you - the pupils! I thought your behaviour, enthusiasm and desire to do well were all outstanding. The contribution you make to the life of the school is something to be proud of. Add to this your knowledge about healthy lifestyles and just how well you all get on together and it is true to say you are excellent ambassadors for the school. Well done!

Even outstanding schools like yours can get better. I have asked Mr Craven and the teachers to share the examples of really good teaching among all the staff so that what works really well can be tried out in different classes; and to make the outside learning areas for the youngest children even better. I know you will want to continue playing your part in the success story that is Horncastle Primary School by working as hard and behaving as well as you do now. I wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead inspector