

The Harrowby Church of England Infant School, Grantham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120599
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327319
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Eaton

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	Infant
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	91
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	Rev Eric McDonald
Headteacher	Mr John Gibbs
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	New Beacon Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 9LJ
Telephone number	01476 564417

Age group	4–7
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Fax number

01476 564417

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most infant schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is greater than average. A smaller than average proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Although the large majority of pupils are White British, a number of different ethnic groups are represented in the school. Several pupils are in the early stages of learning to speak English. Their home languages include Latvian, Polish and Portuguese. In January 2008, the school federated with a junior school. The two schools share a governing body and a headteacher. On a day-to-day basis, the infant school is managed by an assistant headteacher. The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy Schools, Investors in People, Eco Schools Silver, Activemark, and Basic Skills Award. At the time of the inspection, building work was underway to extend the indoor and outdoor accommodation for the Reception year. The children were being taught temporarily in a spare classroom with access to a small outdoor area.

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. It has outstanding features in pupils' personal development and the overall quality of the care, guidance and support provided for them. Many parents are delighted with the way in which their children have progressed since joining the school. As for the pupils, they enjoy school hugely and exclaim, for example, 'We love it!' Their friends and teachers are at the top of a long list of features pupils like best, reflecting the very warm relationships and strong community spirit generated by Harrowby's caring and inclusive ethos.

When they join the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's skills are very variable but are often less well developed than those typical for children of their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made good progress from their individual starting points and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. Pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is good. Assessment information is used effectively in order to match activities to the needs of all groups of pupils, for example, those who find learning particularly difficult and the higher attainers. Teachers always make sure pupils know what they are intended to learn during the lesson. On occasions, they are involved in evaluating how successful they and other pupils have been. These opportunities, which enable pupils to gain a clearer idea of how they can make progress, are not offered frequently enough.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school. They know that the staff look after them extremely well and keep them safe. In turn, pupils take their cue from the school's care for them and its active involvement in the local community. They are always ready to help others, play a full part in supporting the school and behave outstandingly as responsible young citizens. For instance, led by the eco-club, pupils collect the waste from their fruit snacks and use the resulting compost to grow vegetables. The curriculum, which is good overall, provides some excellent opportunities for pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Clubs are wide-ranging but sports such as football, tennis and multi-skills are especially popular. A programme to promote social and emotional development contributes to pupils' outstanding behaviour by helping them to understand their own feelings and consider those of other people.

The school is led and managed well. Its clear sense of direction stems from the expertise and enthusiasm of the headteacher and assistant headteacher. Self-evaluation is accurate and effective. Currently, the senior leaders take the bulk of the responsibility for this aspect of the school's work. Subject leaders' skills are at varying stages of development. In general, these teachers are not sufficiently involved in checks on the quality of teaching and learning nor accountable for performance in their subjects. The federation is already having an impact on what the school provides, for example, through sharing training events. It contributes to the school's good capacity to improve. The links between the two schools typify Harrowby's outstanding partnerships with a range of other professionals and agencies.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

At the start of the Reception year, children's skills are often below those of others of the same age, especially in their use of language and ability to calculate. Although they make good progress, not all children reach the expected levels by the end of the year, particularly with calculating. Good leadership and management identified that boys' writing was previously the area most in need of improvement. This was tackled thoughtfully, for example, by offering

interesting opportunities for children to write during their play. As a result, boys are keener to write and their performance has improved. Teaching and learning is good. All staff promote children's independence consistently and help them to develop into extremely sociable and confident learners. Learning opportunities are planned carefully with indoor and outdoor areas used effectively to stimulate children's enthusiasm and imagination. Empty cardboard boxes became the giant's castle as children playing outside chose to re-enact the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Activities led by adults are matched carefully to what individuals, such as those in the early stages of learning to speak English, need to learn next. Children's welfare is promoted exceptionally well. Links with pre-school settings and parents are highly effective. Observations made by parents, for example, of a child understanding odd and even numbers, are taken fully into account when planning next steps in learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve pupils as fully as possible in evaluating their own learning.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders to enable them to contribute more fully to school self-evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards vary year-on-year depending on pupils' starting points. In recent years, the school's population has become increasingly diverse. After a history of mostly above average standards, they are now broadly average. Typically, but not always, pupils' attainment is highest in writing and mathematics. Boys and girls make equally good progress and achieve well. The school sets challenging targets for each pupil in reading, writing and mathematics. These are usually met and sometimes exceeded. Pupils in the early stages of learning to speak English and those who find learning particularly difficult achieve well as a result of the good attention the school pays to meeting their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Parents confirm how greatly their children enjoy school with remarks such as 'My son can't wait to talk about his day'. Attendance is above average. Pupils have a very keen appreciation of the importance of a healthy diet, pointing out that they won't be strong if they don't eat foods such as carrots and broccoli. They are not in the least fearful but fully appreciate all of the risks that might confront them and how to deal with these effectively. There are no recorded bullying or racist incidents. On the contrary, pupils play together harmoniously. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils worked together to design their 'peace garden' and they care for wildlife and the school building and grounds. They are active members of the local community and understand that they share the world equally with people of different faiths and cultures. Pupils' good academic progress, positive attitudes and ability to be independent and work as part of a team help to prepare them well for junior school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are planned carefully so activities are varied and keep pupils interested. As a result, there is a good pace to learning. Because pupils are so interested and want to please their teachers, they invariably meet the high expectations for their work and behaviour. This in turn means that pupils learn to work productively without the need of constant close adult supervision, thus enabling staff to concentrate on leading particular groups. Lessons promote speaking and listening well. Pupils are regularly encouraged to talk to each other to clarify their ideas and put them into words. Teaching assistants' skills are used effectively, for example, to support pupils in the early stages of learning to speak English. However, pupils are not always actively involved in finding out what they could do to make their work even better. In one good lesson, pupils considered a passage 'written' by the class puppet and identified what was good about it and how it could be improved. They also considered how to improve their work during a lesson on the use of time connectives in writing. However, such good practice is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school works hard to provide pupils with memorable experiences, for example, holding a baby turkey during a farm visit, wearing clothes and tasting food from other cultures, and Maypole dancing. Increasingly, links are made between subjects through the use of themes such as 'Buildings and Homes'. This approach is being developed further to enable pupils to spend more time applying skills such as writing, for example, when they are finding out about buildings from the past. Classrooms in Years 1 and 2 are organised so as to provide good opportunities for pupils to learn through role-play or by taking on 'challenges', such as independently researching a country they would like to visit. Special days and weeks enhance the basic curriculum and promote learning and personal development. During 'Bring Your Bike or Scooter to School Week', pupils learned about road safety, exercised, and had enormous fun. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of pupils learning to speak English and those who find learning particularly difficult.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents are confident that their children are safe in school. Current government safeguarding requirements are met. All the necessary policies are in place and staff training, for example, in child protection matters, is given high priority. The school responds promptly to changing circumstances. For instance, a fire evacuation practice was held to check the suitability of the arrangements during the current building work. Staff know pupils very well. They are quick to notice any changes in their demeanour that might indicate a problem. Support is offered to parents through family learning opportunities and a drop-in service provided by the school nurse. The very close links with the junior school help Year 2 pupils to transfer smoothly. During lessons, staff refer frequently to pupils' individual targets and children go to collect the headteacher's award when they achieve them. Extra support is provided speedily when assessments indicate that a pupil's progress may be faltering.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

High quality plans for moving the school forward ensure that it has made good progress since the previous inspection. When a course of action is agreed, it is implemented consistently. This is seen in the way classrooms and activities in Years 1 and 2 now more closely reflect the methods used in the Reception class, with pupils learning increasingly independently. Teachers manage the subjects for which they are responsible, for example, by ensuring suitable resources are available. Developing their leadership skills in order to improve the provision and raise standards further is a current school priority. Equal opportunities are promoted well. The school works hard to ensure that no pupils are disadvantaged. For example, a lunchtime club is provided for pupils who are not able to stay behind after school. Harrowby makes a good contribution to community cohesion, for instance, by actively encouraging all parents to become involved in its life. Governance is good. Working parties enable governors to focus on particular aspects of the school, such as finance, whilst individual responsibilities ensure they are building up their knowledge of both schools. The school provides good value for money. By allocating both schools' resources flexibly, governors are enabling Harrowby to improve the accommodation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	3
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	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?	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	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

13 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of The Harrowby CE Infant School, Grantham, NG31 9LJ

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when I visited your school. I really enjoyed my time with you. Special thanks go to the children who met me to talk about the school. They gave me lots of very useful information which helped me to decide that yours is a good school.

There are some things about your school that are outstanding. One of these is the way that the adults look after you, so you feel safe. In return, you help other people by doing jobs and behaving beautifully so everyone can enjoy learning and playing. I know how much you like school and I can understand why. You do so many interesting things and have such a lot of friends. You learn a great deal about how to be healthy.

You make good progress in your work because teaching is good at your school. I have asked the school to help you join in checking and marking your work, so you know even better how to improve.

Your headteacher and assistant headteacher look hard at what happens in school and have lots of ideas for making it even better. I have asked the other teachers to join in this work. Everyone at the school works very hard to make sure you are all happy and learning well. I send all the adults and each one of you my very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Rosemary Eaton

Lead inspector