

Hawthorn Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121835
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327581
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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)	320
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	Kate Webb
Headteacher	Karena Corkill
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hawthorn Road Kettering NN15 7HT
Telephone number	01536 512204

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Inspection number	327581

Fax number

01536 512468

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws its intake from the centre of Kettering. The large majority of pupils are White British and less than 10% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language and an even smaller number are beginners in English. The school has a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and a very small number with disabilities. Because of the numbers in each year group, the school has mixed-age classes. The current headteacher took up post in January 2009. The school has the Activemark and Investors in People awards and won the 2008 regional Junior Road Safety Officer (JRSO) Award.

The governing body runs extended provision which includes a breakfast, after-school and holiday club and a part-time play school for children between the ages of three and four.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. A vibrant extra-curricular and enrichment programme in an otherwise satisfactory curriculum leads to good personal development for pupils. Pupils develop a strong sense of community and grow into confident and mature young people by the time they reach Year 6.

Currently, overall standards are in line with national averages and pupils' progress, from their starting points, is satisfactory. There are signs that standards are beginning to improve and progress is starting to accelerate. Many pupils have made good progress this year, especially in Years 5 and 6. Indeed in Year 6, progress for some has been rapid. Consequently, Year 6 pupils are on track to attain above average standards in English, including in writing, and mathematics at the end of the year. Compared to their performance at the end of Year 2, these results are indicative of satisfactory progress in English and good progress in mathematics. Standards in the rest of the school are not as high, particularly in writing. Many pupils struggle with handwriting, punctuation and spelling and also with the quality of their ideas when writing. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects, or to articulate and rehearse their ideas through discussion before committing to paper.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with the best practice in Years 5 to 6. Teachers provide clear learning objectives but the match of work to the needs of different groups is not yet fully evident across many lessons, particularly in terms of challenging work for more able pupils. Pupils' learning is slowed by lack of pace, because of over-long introductions or too much time allocated for straightforward tasks. In most lessons, support staff offer effective help to those who find learning difficult. These staff also contribute well to the effective support which is helping pupils who are underachieving to make better progress this year. While work is marked regularly, guidance to pupils on how to improve their work is inconsistent so pupils are not always sure of what they need to improve, or how.

Pupils are well looked after and cared for. Good links with external agencies, professionals and parents ensure pupils' well-being. Good behaviour encourages a sense of safety. Pupils feel that bullying is rare and are confident about going to an adult with concerns. Parents appreciate the approachability of staff and are very positive about the school. The school is a cohesive community where pupils get on well with one another. They understand the importance of learning about the different religions and cultures represented in the school and the United Kingdom (UK) and agree that racism is wrong. They do not always recall what they have learned about other groups because the school has yet to develop more first-hand opportunities for pupils to work with and mix with those who are different from themselves. The school has clearly identified pupils' needs and has a working plan to forge, in particular, links with communities across Britain that are not represented in the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear direction for development. She and her assistant headteacher work in partnership to accurately identify and focus on the key priorities that will influence pupils' performance and accelerate their progress. They are well supported by staff and governors. Given the important strides made this year in improving the school, there is sound capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start in Reception with skills and knowledge that are similar to those of others of their age, although their speaking skills and their personal and social development are generally better. They make satisfactory progress to attain standards that are broadly average by the end of Reception, although standards in writing are often lower. There are good opportunities for children to develop their creative skills, and the environment, both inside and outside, is vibrant and stimulating. Development of work on letters and sounds has had a positive impact on children's enthusiasm for writing and also their understanding of how words are put together. This is helping both their reading and writing skills. However, not enough opportunities for writing are built into the everyday activities provided. Work is practical in nature but staff do not make enough day-to-day use of the activities chosen by children themselves to build on their interests and develop their learning further. Relationships are a strength and children feel happy and safe because good attention is paid to their welfare. They concentrate well on tasks, happily share resources and sustain good levels of interest even when introductions are lengthy. Adults are supportive and use sound questions to help children think through ideas. However, they do not always give children enough time to think about the answers.

The playschool provision is good and children make good progress in their learning and development. Imaginative tasks interest children, who focus, concentrate and persevere to do well. Adults show children how to explore the world around them. They confidently choose from the good range of activities because staff effectively encourage them to make their own choices. There is good questioning by adults and this encourages children to give extended answers and to ask questions themselves. Great attention is given to children's welfare.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactorily led and managed as a result of effective oversight by the headteacher and accurate self-evaluation. This has been used to develop the area further and make sure that new requirements for this stage are met. New procedures for assessment have ensured that children's progress is satisfactorily tracked and assessed. The information is beginning to be used effectively to support planning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the Early Years Foundation Stage so that there are more opportunities for writing and for children to learn by choosing activities which interest them.
- Provide more writing opportunities for pupils in the main school and for speaking in lessons to help improve standards in writing.
- Ensure that in lessons, work is better matched to pupils' needs, especially the more able, and better use is made of time for pupils' learning.
- Make sure that pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and that this practice is consistent across the school.

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

In 2008, standards were below average at the end of Year 2 and in line with national averages at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. These results indicated broadly satisfactory progress for Year 6 pupils but signalled some underachievement for those in Year 2. Uneven progress in previous years has resulted in some pupils not achieving as well as they might, particularly among the youngest pupils. Although progress remains uneven, underachievement among pupils is being rigorously identified and tackled. More work is needed to improve the overall quality of writing. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others. Support for those who find learning difficult ensures they make sound progress. Progress in the knowledge aspects of science is often good but is less secure in investigative work. Pupils are making sound progress in developing their information and communication (ICT) skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and try hard to do well. However, their attendance is average because a number of parents take their children on holiday during term time. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They exhibit good social skills and work very cooperatively in pairs and groups. They are helpful, polite and considerate of others. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities such as becoming a school councillor. They make a good contribution to the school and local community, for example, by participating in a video-conferencing project with pupils from other local schools. They show care for others through their charity fund-raising activities to support organisations such as the NSPCC. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives and know the dangers of alcohol, smoking and drug misuse. They are aware of good eating habits, although not all of them adopt these. However, large numbers take part in sporting activities and enjoy keeping fit. Pupils' ability to work sensibly and cooperatively, combined with the standards achieved in literacy, numeracy and ICT, gives them a sound grounding for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Working relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Teachers are supportive of pupils and use praise effectively to develop their confidence. Increasing use is made of interactive whiteboards to make activities more interesting, but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use them too. In the best lessons, work is carefully matched to different abilities of pupils in the class so that everyone finds the work appropriately challenging. This is not consistent across the school and, particularly where teaching is satisfactory, the level of challenge does not meet all the pupils' needs, especially the more able. There are occasions where lessons are too teacher-led, limiting active pupil participation and missing opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills through group or pair work. Marking is frequent and encouraging, but too often it does not tell pupils what they have done well or how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum takes appropriate account of mixed-age classes. Recent improvements mean that teachers are now beginning to link different subjects to make learning more interesting. However, there are missed opportunities for writing, especially in subjects such as history, geography and science. French and Spanish teaching assistants provide regular modern foreign language teaching across the school. Annual residential trips for pupils in Years 3 to 6 support personal development well. Pupils appreciate history days where they become 'Victorians' or 'Vikings' for the day. 'Cultural weeks' which take place every summer contribute well to pupils' understanding of other cultures. However, the school knows further work is needed to provide pupils with more enduring first-hand experiences of those who are different. The extended provision, which includes a before- and after-school club and a playschool, is of good quality and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a very caring ethos. Safeguarding and health and safety procedures meet government requirements. The good attention to pupils' welfare extends to the breakfast and after-school clubs and the play school. A good range of support is used to help pupils who find learning difficult. Attendance is satisfactorily monitored and strategies put in place to discourage holidays during term time.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. While pupils have targets for literacy and numeracy, the quality of guidance to help them understand how to improve their work is not consistent across the school. It is better at the top end of the school where pupils are surer of their targets than younger ones. There is some use of peer and self-assessment, and again this is better at the top end of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is enthusiasm and drive to move the school forward. Staff are keen to develop their skills and improve their use of the most effective methods for promoting pupils' progress while replicating the good practice already seen in Years 5 and 6. The current tracking system is both robust and rigorous and provides valuable information about progress at individual pupil, class and whole-school levels. This is helpfully shared with staff and governors and used particularly well to identify and support those making slower progress. The headteacher and assistant headteacher regularly monitor the quality of teaching. Fewer opportunities for subject leaders to monitor teaching mean they are not fully aware of the quality of pupils' learning. Community cohesion is promoted well at school and local community level but there are gaps at UK and global level. The school is beginning to evaluate the impact of its community cohesion work and address these gaps. Governors provide satisfactory oversight and are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
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	2
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
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**

21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hawthorn Community Primary School, Kettering NN15 7HT

We enjoyed visiting your school, and in particular we enjoyed talking to you. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. The school gives you a satisfactory education. As a result, you make steady progress and usually reach the expected standards by the time you are ready to leave at the end of Year 6. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A sound curriculum helps your learning.

These are some of the best things about the school.

- Children in Reception develop good social skills and enjoy their first proper year in school.
- You develop into mature and sensible young people who are thoughtful and considerate.
- The school provides you with a good range of after-school activities and visits, including residential trips. We were enthralled by the descriptions of some Year 3 pupils about the tunnelling and caving in their trip to Wales.
- The school takes good care of you and makes you feel part of the school community.
- You get on very well with one another and with the adults in the school.
- Your headteacher is working very hard with the staff to further improve the school.

There are a few things that need to be improved.

- Give the children in Reception more opportunities to practise their writing and also to choose more for themselves what they would like to learn.
- Help to make your writing better, particularly spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
- Make sure that teachers give you work which is just at the right level, so that it is not too easy and challenges some of you to think hard.
- Make sure that you know what to do to make your work better.

It was very nice to meet you and we wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Gulshan Kayembe

Lead inspector