

Howard Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124080
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328045
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	John Horwood

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)	78
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	John Shorthouse
Headteacher	Carol Eyley
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Square Elford Tamworth B79 9DB
Telephone number	01827 383292
Fax number	01827 383292

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school in a rural location near Tamworth. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is for Reception children who are taught in a mixed-age class with the Year 1 pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Parental views were typified by one comment which said, 'The school provides a safe and warm environment with lots of positive behaviour as a key feature.' Pupils say they enjoy school because lessons are interesting and they like events such as science week. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, demonstrating the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further. The governors' committee structure is not efficient at reviewing results and procedures. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion and pupils develop a caring understanding of the world they live in.

Attainment on entry varies from year to year because year groups are small. Children mostly enter school with the skills expected for children of a similar age or, occasionally, slightly higher. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is satisfactory and children make satisfactory progress at the start of their education. Children do not always have sufficient opportunity to make independent choices and move freely between the indoor and outdoor learning areas.

By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties are given effective support so they make the same progress as their classmates. Pupils make good progress in developing their personal skills and their personal development and well-being are good. Systems to monitor and record progress are satisfactory and these are used satisfactorily by leaders and teachers in the majority of lessons. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but work is not always sufficiently challenging for all the pupils. Opportunities for pupils to work independently are limited. Target setting is in place and most pupils are aware of their targets. The marking of pupils' work is regular and tells pupils where they have gone wrong. The teachers' comments are often too general and not written in language that tells the pupils exactly what they need to do to improve. The satisfactory curriculum engages pupils fully through interesting and enjoyable activities. Additional laptop computers have now enhanced the information and communication technology (ICT) provision but the planned use of these across the curriculum is at an early stage. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and enriches pupils' learning and personal development.

Pastoral care is good, and safeguarding requirements, including those for internet security, are met. The school's strong links with external agencies contribute to the good support for pupils who find learning difficult for whatever reason. Pupils behave well, enjoy school and know how to keep themselves safe. Attendance is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, eat healthily and take part in sport with enthusiasm. The sound basic skills they acquire, as well as their good personal development, ensure they are satisfactorily prepared for their future education and the world of work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children like coming to school. The current Reception children entered school with skills slightly above the levels expected. They make satisfactory progress and standards are above average. Children make most progress in their social and personal development because of the good, caring support provided. They quickly learn to get on well with each other and the adults who work with them. They behave well and are often absorbed in activities such as identifying

different items and materials buried in the sand. They participate enthusiastically in all the activities provided, listening to teachers and trying things out for themselves.

The curriculum covers each of the expected areas of learning, ensuring that children are able to make satisfactory progress. Staff organise activities between indoors and out, but do not yet allow children to move freely between all the indoor and outdoor learning areas. Teachers adapt the curriculum suitably to individual needs. Staff work well as a team to ensure that they focus equally on both the children in Reception and the pupils in Year 1. In achieving this, a few activities are too teacher led and children do not fully develop their skills of choosing independently what to do. Teachers look after the children well. They create a safe and secure environment where children can grow in confidence. This is greatly appreciated by parents, who are very pleased with the current provision.

The staffing and leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage changed only nine days before the inspection. Children are still developing relationships with the staff and this sometimes restricts progress in lessons at the present time. Both teaching and leadership and management are currently satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work is sufficiently challenging for all pupils and enable them to develop the skills of working independently.
- Ensure the marking of pupils' work gives clear advice that enables pupils to improve their work and reach challenging targets.
- Develop the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure full use of the indoor and outdoor areas so that children develop independence.
- Develop a more efficient governing body structure to support the school in reviewing results and procedures.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

As a result of sound teaching and learning, pupils make satisfactory progress. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, standards are broadly average, although there can be some year-on-year variation because of the small year groups. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because they are provided with effective support. Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and on occasions, are capable of making better progress. Standards in Year 2 are currently average overall in reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school operates as a harmonious community. They have good opportunities to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness through activities such as a 'global Africa club' and meaningful prayers in assembly. They are able to communicate their feelings in a responsible manner and they show respect for their peers and adults. Through their outstanding behaviour and their respect for others, pupils show they know right from wrong. Within lessons, their behaviour allows all pupils to

concentrate on learning, for which they show good attitudes. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and this is reflected by above average attendance. They know how to keep safe and who to talk to if they have any problems. Pupils said there is no bullying in the school but they know what to do if any did occur. They make healthy choices of food and look forward to sports activities. This is reflected by the Activemark award in 2007. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They enjoy being school councillors and responsibilities such as helping in assembly. The school council is very active and, for example, was fully involved in determining the allocation of funds to decorate the toilets. Pupils take part in many activities to raise money for charities. Their good personal development, supported by sound basic skills in academic subjects, prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. Pupils want to learn and pay attention in lessons. They are willing to engage in their learning and this helps them make satisfactory progress. They understand what they have to do because teachers all have good subject knowledge and explain things clearly to them. All lessons, even where teaching is only satisfactory, are made to be interesting. Teachers use assessment information in planning pupils' work but the effectiveness of this is variable. Work is not always accurately matched to the abilities of individual pupils to ensure all are sufficiently challenged during group activities. The work they are set does not always help them develop the skills of independent learning. In some lessons the pace is slow and too long is spent teaching to the whole class. Pupils who find learning difficult are well supported by the teaching assistants and the strategies provided for them. Teachers mark work regularly, but comments are not always made so pupils will understand what they really need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is enriched with planned learning opportunities such as a science week, a multicultural week and visits to the multi-faith trail. These make the curriculum exciting for the pupils and make a significant contribution to their awareness of the community outside the school. Pupils also gain an understanding of the community through the use of local facilities such as use of the millennium playground, involvement with tree planting at a local farm and the walled garden project. The art content of the curriculum was highly praised by pupils and helps them learn about other cultures. Provision for ICT is improving with the recent acquisition of wireless laptops. However, the development of pupils' ICT skills throughout the school has not yet been planned appropriately. Good individual plans are provided for those with learning difficulties to ensure they get the support they need. The provision for personal, social and health education is good and pupils are made aware of health and safety issues. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are wide, varied and well attended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The high level of commitment of staff ensures good quality care throughout the school. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are securely in place. Health and safety requirements

are met. There are good systems for managing behaviour and monitoring attendance. Actions to improve attendance through reducing term-time holidays have been effective. All staff work well to ensure all pupils are included in activities. Pupils who need extra help are provided for effectively and make the same progress as others. Academic guidance is developing, but teachers' written comments in books are not clear enough for pupils to understand exactly what to do to improve. Within the classroom, the very good relationships ensure that pupils do ask for help and this is given willingly by the teachers. Pupils are well supported when they join the school, with good systems in place to help them settle quickly. They say they are well supported in moving into the secondary school. Communications with parents are good, ensuring staff and parents work together to support the pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and governors have a common vision of improving the school to give pupils the best opportunities. Subject leaders are not yet sufficiently involved in achieving this vision. Actions from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed but further work is needed to ensure a more visible impact on standards. Monitoring of teaching is effectively carried out by the headteacher and the local authority and has resulted in improved teaching. Self-evaluation shows that leaders satisfactorily understand the school's strengths and areas for development. These are addressed in the school development plan, although actions are not focused and clearly prioritised. Governors are enthusiastic and work hard to support the school. The committee structure is not used to ensure governors carry out their work efficiently and too much is discussed by the whole governing body at very long meetings. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of what is needed to promote community cohesion. They have identified and introduced activities such as multicultural week and the visit to the Derby faith trail to give pupils experiences that have been identified as specific needs to enhance their understanding. They have assessed the impact of such events. All aspects of community cohesion are satisfactorily addressed but at this stage monitoring of impact is informal.

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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	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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**

1 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Howard Primary School, Elford, B79 9DB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing how your school is helping you learn. We were impressed by how well you behave in lessons and how polite you are to visitors.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. These are some of the strengths of your school.

- You enjoy being at school and find your lessons interesting.
- You behave exceptionally well and develop good personal skills.
- The staff care about you and look after you well.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- There is a good range of clubs, activities and visits.
- Your headteacher and staff are working hard to improve your learning further.

In order to improve the school further, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- ensure that the work teachers set you provides sufficient challenge and helps you learn how to extend your knowledge further and to work more independently
- ensure when teachers mark your work that they give you advice on how to reach your targets with words that you can understand
- increase the opportunities children in Reception have to choose their own activities and move between the different learning areas
- improve the way governors discuss school matters so that their main meetings are shorter.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Horwood Lead inspector