

Hawthorns First School, Durrington

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125950
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328428
Inspection date	25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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	3–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	166
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	Paul Grantham
Headteacher	Kathy Offer
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Poplar Road Durrington Worthing BN13 3EZ
Telephone number	01903 268174
Fax number	01903 693074

Age group	3–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hawthorns First is smaller than most other similar schools. Many of its pupils are taught in classes containing more than one year group. The large majority of pupils come from White British families, while others come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small minority are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and with a range of needs, including a few with social, emotional and behavioural needs. Little Owls Nursery unit forms part of the school's provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, running separate morning and afternoon sessions. Most of these children then join the school's Reception class, and there are also new arrivals into Reception who have not attended the school's Nursery. When the school was last inspected, it was found to be in need of significant improvement and was given a notice to improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The overall effectiveness of Hawthorns First is now satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been such that pupils' achievement is also satisfactory. Better academic progress means that standards have risen to broadly average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Sharper assessment practices enable staff to identify and tackle particular strengths and weaknesses in the attainment of each year group, keep a close eye on pupils' progress and modify planning more accurately to need and ability. A lively, stimulating curriculum provides much interest and enjoyment, with particular strengths in the first-hand experience offered by visitors to school and trips out.

Most parents express good levels of satisfaction with their children's education. They are pleased that their children are happy at school, and praise the approachability and care of staff. Pastoral care continues to be a strong element of the school's work, including tailored support for its more vulnerable pupils. Good behaviour and harmonious relationships are the result. Attendance, however, has fallen since the school's last inspection. Consequently, not all pupils are gaining as much as they should from their education. Although illness has been an important factor, attendance levels this school year are well below average.

The youngest children have a good start in the Nursery and Reception groups, where they achieve well. Teaching here is good, and classroom practice has moved on a good deal in other year groups, too. As a result, teaching elsewhere in the school is satisfactory, and sometimes better. Many pupils in Years 1 to 3 now make good progress. Nevertheless, there is still too much variability for overall progress to be greater than satisfactory. The school knows that it must continue to enhance the quality of teaching and learning even further in order to even out and accelerate achievement to a higher level. While there have been improvements to academic guidance and to the use of learning targets, pupils are still not always receiving enough focused advice about how to improve their work.

The school has a sound grasp of its strengths and priorities and is now steadily making headway. Members of staff appreciate the headteacher's support and guidance in their endeavours to move forward, and all have worked together closely to tighten up provision, improve practice and quicken pupils' progress. Their achievements so far show the school to be in a secure position for further improvement. Governors are now far better placed than they were before to provide challenge and direction, having gained a much fuller knowledge of the school's work and the outcomes for pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

While it varies a good deal from year to year, attainment on entry to both the Nursery and Reception groups is now just below the expected level. Good progress ensures broadly average standards by the time children start Year 1. Provision is strong in both settings, particularly in the development of personal skills and well-being. Children are, therefore, happy, confident and sensible. Children in the Nursery greet visitors with a wave. They are full of smiles during a warm-up session as they 'tickle' their tummies, stretch up high and turn around, carefully following the teacher's directions. Those in Reception readily play together and clear away

quickly and efficiently. They know when to wash their hands, especially after getting mucky fingers using clay, and understand the importance of wearing a hat, even in the spring sunshine.

The Reception area is a roomy, stimulating environment, with lots of children's work around. The outside space has been improved. It provides interest and variety, and is available whatever the weather, with umbrellas to hand for when it rains. Space in the Nursery unit is more confined. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching here is strong. Questions gently probe and extend children's knowledge and understanding, always building on what children have said and encouraging 'good' speaking and listening. Parents are successfully drawn into their children's education through, for example, opportunities to join literacy sessions in the classroom.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistently good teaching and learning across Years 1 to 3 in order to accelerate progress beyond its present overall satisfactory level.
- Make sure that full use is made of learning targets, marking and feedback to give pupils focused information about how to improve their work.
- Increase attendance levels so that all pupils gain as much as they possibly can from their time at school.

A small proportion of 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

The school has now secured satisfactory achievement for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few learning to speak English for the first time. As a result, standards have begun to lift. Results for last year's Year 2, for example, rose significantly on those in 2007 to broadly average levels in reading, writing and mathematics. To some extent, higher results were expected because this was a relatively higher attaining group than the one the year before. Nevertheless, the school's predictions for the current Year 2 also show a broadly average picture, and with a group that is not as able overall as last year's. Better use of assessment information has been crucial to academic improvement because it enables the school to spot and attend to areas of relative weakness in good time, such as reading in the current Year 2. Pupils in Year 3 are making satisfactory progress, and therefore maintaining similarly average standards in relation to pupils of their age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

'My son thoroughly enjoys his time at school and has a good relationship with teachers and fellow pupils.' This particular comment from one parent reflects a general view expressed by others, and is endorsed by pupils themselves. Among their favourite subjects are the important ones of English, mathematics and science, and most popular of all are trips and visits. Pupils are friendly and polite. Their good behaviour illustrates their respect for each other, a strong understanding of right and wrong, and a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Although they point to some occasional unkindness and challenging behaviour, they feel the school is a safe place to be and one where it is easy to share any concerns. These positive qualities and sensible attitudes add much to pupils' learning. Well below average attendance,

however, means that some pupils miss out on their lessons. While the present figure includes the effects of some widespread illness among pupils last term, attendance had already slipped below average last year.

Helping to plan and maintain the pond and drawing up school rules represent pupils' valuable contributions to the school's community. Involvement in local events and national charitable activities also widen their sense of responsibility towards others. Together with their many good personal qualities, pupils' improving academic skills and understanding prepare them more successfully for the future than before.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Much has been done to eradicate inadequate teaching and lift its quality to an overall satisfactory level. There is also some good teaching, but practice of this calibre is not yet consistent. In all lessons, pupils are happy to answer questions and work hard at their tasks. They find practical and investigative activities particularly engaging, and the chance to establish understanding in this exciting way leads to good progress. Pupils' explanations are enhanced because they are taught the correct subject vocabulary. Imaginative strategies, such as using 'post-it' notes to record and collect their ideas, ensure all pupils participate, while the visual stimulus provided by the classroom's computerised whiteboard keeps them focused and interested.

Too often, though, opportunities for pupils to take a greater part in their lessons and learning are missed. Examples of this shortcoming include the chance for pupils to be drawn more fully into discussion, or to collect some 'real life' information as a starting point for mathematics work. Pupils benefit from a good number of adults, who provide close support to small groups. Those pupils working independently, however, sometimes do not receive the timely help they need to develop ideas for their writing. These relative weaknesses account for pupils sometimes becoming fidgety and restless.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school now has a rich and stimulating curriculum. Trips to Portchester Castle, a visiting knight from a local historical society, and even a 'princess', bring a real excitement to pupils' learning. The theme of a current 'Arts' event – Renoir's painting entitled 'Umbrellas' – is influencing work in other subjects, such as writing and mathematics. In addition, planning has been varied to accommodate the needs of different ability groups and mixed-age classes. These developments provide an invaluable resource for innovative and challenging teaching, but their potential has yet to be used to the full during lessons.

Much is done to ensure pupils are fit and healthy, aided by links with a local sports college, 'keep fit', free fruit and a karate club after school. As a result, pupils' understanding of the importance of these activities has increased, and is now good. Participation in local festivals and competitions, church events and working with the local probationary team all add to pupils' wider experience. The school is mindful of celebrating other cultures and faiths represented within its community and wider afield. These studies already take place through its curriculum, but the school acknowledges that this area of pupils' understanding is ready for further development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

While pastoral care is strong, academic guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils' safety, security and well-being are promoted well. Individualised programmes of support for its more vulnerable pupils involve close links with families and outside agencies, as well as adaptations to the curriculum. This approach has particularly benefited pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs. Similar work has taken place with the very few who have high levels of absence, although the school has not been as successful with pupils more generally in maintaining average attendance levels. Systems for collecting assessment information are strong and the school is working steadily to use this information to greater effect. Early identification of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for instance, enables the school to provide support as quickly as possible. The school continues to improve its use of learning targets, so that pupils are now familiar with those for mathematics, and to develop its marking and feedback to pupils. Nevertheless, practices vary too much and, consequently, pupils still do not receive as much information and direction as they should about how they can do better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Staff and governors are pulling together to ensure continuous growth in the school's effectiveness. The local authority has provided valuable guidance and expertise, including support for the wider development of leadership skills. The school knows the needs of its pupils and community well, and reaches out to its minority ethnic groups. More focused assessment has been crucial in giving the school clear information about what it needs to do to improve. Strategic planning takes the school forward in appropriately small steps, although criteria for judging the success of initiatives are sometimes too generalised to make it possible to check the progress made. While having brought the school to a satisfactory level of performance, staff and governors are aware that they must now do more to create greater consistency in the quality of provision and in pupils' progress. Governance has improved to a satisfactory level. Efficient administration, good links and liaison with staff and more systematic monitoring gives them greater knowledge of the school. Consequently, they now provide the challenge and support they should. They are also open to new ideas, and recognise, for example, the importance of extending community cohesion beyond its current satisfactory position, so that pupils have a greater awareness of the diversity of traditions and beliefs in this country and elsewhere.

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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?	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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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?	3
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	4
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?	2
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**

26 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Hawthorns First School, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 3EZ

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit, and especially having the opportunity to join you during your Arts Week. It was good to see you enjoying your dance work so much, pretending to be Victorian ladies and gentlemen!

Last time inspectors visited your school, they found that it needed a lot of improvement. Your staff and governors have worked hard since then to make the school better. As a result, your school is now satisfactory. Importantly, you are all making faster progress because teaching and your learning during lessons have improved. As a result, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are higher than they were before. Your parents are particularly pleased that you enjoy coming to school and that staff take care of you so carefully.

Here are some other important things about you and your school:

- Your good behaviour, interest and willingness to get on with your work are important, too, because they help you to make satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress in lessons.
- The school has created an exciting curriculum – indeed, you told us how much you enjoy the trips out of school and the visitors who come to see you, like the knight and the princess!
- Those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes do well.
- Staff keep a very careful check on your progress so that they can plan the work you need to move on.
- Your governors are now playing a much greater part in helping your school to improve.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better:

- Make sure that those of you in Years 1 to 3 are always taught well so that you make even faster progress.
- Use learning targets and feedback about your work to give you all the information you need about how to improve.
- Make sure you all come to school regularly so that you can make the most of your education.

Yours faithfully

Patricia Davies

Lead inspector