

Highfields Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130258
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	328521
Inspection date	1 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	307
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	Hanif Asmal
Headteacher	Jane Ridgewell
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pluto Close Highfields Leicester LE2 0UU
Telephone number	01162 531382
Fax number	01162 621651

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the evenness of pupils' progress as they move through the school
- how the school is raising standards in writing throughout the school
- the standards of boys in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2
- the school's effectiveness in promoting community cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with senior staff, the chair of governors, pupils and staff; analysis of pupils' work; visits to all classes; observations of other aspects of the school day such as assembly; and the analysis of the parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular, information on pupils' progress. 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 of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

In this large primary school, a well-above-average proportion of pupils have English as an additional language. Approximately one third of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Fifteen minority ethnic backgrounds are represented, of which the largest groups are of Asian or Asian British-Indian heritage. The school serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage and just under half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, as is the level of mobility amongst pupils. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Highfields Primary is a good school. It is a very happy, vibrant community where pupils achieve well and show outstanding personal development. This results from good teaching, good leadership and management and an excellent curriculum. Parents are supportive and particularly value the excellent care provided for their children. One parent, who reflected the views of others, wrote, 'The school is supportive of children and parents. Parents feel valued and listened to and if extra support is needed for children it is always provided.' Early identification of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities leads to prompt and focused support to help them make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are also identified and supported effectively. Assessment information is used rigorously to identify groups or individuals needing focused intervention in their learning, and to set effective and challenging targets. Links with other agencies to support pupils' well-being are excellent. Although the school has very good procedures in place for promoting good attendance, overall attendance is affected by high mobility and by parents taking their children on extended holidays abroad. This means attendance is broadly average. A high priority is given to ensuring pupils' health and safety, and procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Pupils who enter school other than at the usual time, including those who are at an early stage of learning English, settle quickly and very soon feel a part of the 'Highfields family'. The school's care, guidance and support for its pupils are outstanding.

Central to the school's success is the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, who provides clear, focused educational direction. Other leaders ably support her, and the enthusiasm, commitment and teamwork of all staff is strong. Governors know the school well and are closely involved in promoting improvement. The school's track record of improvement since the previous inspection shows that it has good capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation is accurate and informative. Leaders check the school's performance carefully and are adept at identifying and prioritising areas for development. They then take decisive action to bring about improvement, as shown in the way the school has responded to the well-below-average writing standards seen in the past. As a result of the strategies implemented, standards are rising and progress is good in all year groups. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science, which shows good achievement from when pupils first start at school with a low skills base.

Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress and to enter Year 1 with many having made great strides in their language and personal and social development. Although staff try very hard to maintain the interest of boys in reading, writing and number activities, boys very quickly choose to be involved in more physical or creative activities. This is especially evident during independent learning time. Consequently, girls attain higher standards than boys. Although this difference is still evident at the end of Year 2, boys and girls do equally well in year groups further up the school. The staff are working hard to eradicate this difference, with some success. However, there is still some way to go in developing the younger boys' skills of perseverance in the academic subjects of the curriculum.

Achievement is good in Years 1 to 6 because teaching is good and lessons are interesting. There is strong emphasis on pupils knowing what is expected of them in lessons. Learning objectives are shared with pupils and during lessons they are given good guidance about how to achieve success in their work. Teaching assistants are carefully deployed to meet the needs of specific groups. Those pupils who are not on track to attain the levels expected of them are given

specific programmes of work which accelerate their progress. Pupils at an early stage of learning English also receive good targeted support, and tracking data show that these pupils make rapid progress and are soon able to access the curriculum. Marking is good and teachers provide good advice to pupils about how to improve their work. The next step, as the school recognises, is for pupils to begin to reflect on their learning, so they are able to identify for themselves how to achieve their targets and how to make their work better.

The school has worked hard to very successfully provide an exciting, relevant curriculum which has been very well adapted to reflect the cultural backgrounds of pupils. Recording their ideas in one book or in their 'learning books' enables them to make links between different subjects and to apply their literacy and numeracy skills. An extensive range of enrichment activities very effectively extend and add further interest to the curriculum and help to promote pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school. Behaviour is excellent, contributing much to the school being a calm, happy and safe place. Pupils have very good knowledge of how to stay safe. They understand the importance of keeping fit and healthy through diet and exercise. Pupils of all ages mix well and relationships are excellent. This was seen in an assembly when children from the Early Years Foundation Stage worked together with Year 5 pupils to celebrate the Sikh New Year festival of Vaisakhi. Pupils willingly take on responsibility by being members of the school council, for example. They also contribute very well to the wider community through organising fund-raising events for local charities or working on the development of the allotment area. The governors' action plan for developing community cohesion is thorough and detailed, and is successful in developing pupils' understanding of life in a multicultural society. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education and future life.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with skills and abilities well below the levels expected for their age. Through skilled and engaging teaching, good progress is made and children enter Year 1 with standards that are broadly average. This shows marked improvement in comparison with the standards attained at the end of this key stage in previous years. However, girls consistently attain higher levels than boys. This is because, although boys enjoy their learning very much, they often choose the more lively activities that support the physical and creative aspects of learning. Boys do not always keep working at reading, writing and number activities, and staff are working hard to develop these perseverance skills. There is a good balance of activities that are adult directed and those that children select for themselves. Effective use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas. Children settle well in the welcoming and stimulating environment and behaviour is good. The provision for ensuring children's welfare is outstanding and the school's very good partnership with parents begins at this early stage. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is knowledgeable and provides good leadership and management. She has been effective in improving the satisfactory provision identified in the previous inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop strategies to increase the perseverance of boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and number activities to improve boys' achievement in these areas.
- Improve pupils' skills of self-assessment so they are better able to decide for themselves how to improve their work.

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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?	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?	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	2
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	3
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	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?	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?	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**

5 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfields Primary School, Leicester, LE2 0UU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. Those of you we spoke to told us you are proud of your school and enjoy your lessons, so you will all be pleased to know yours is a good school. Here is what we found out.

- You make good progress and, by the time you leave in Year 6, the standards of your work in reading, writing and mathematics are similar to those found in most schools. This is because the teaching is good.
- You show a great deal of enjoyment in school activities and your behaviour is exemplary.
- Those of you who need help with your learning do really well because of the extra support you are given.
- Those of you in the Early Years Foundation Stage get a good start to school life.
- The staff work very hard to provide you with lots of exciting things to do.
- You all get on well together, and it was good to see how younger children worked with older ones. Your assembly celebrating Vaisakhi was wonderful – I really enjoyed the dancing some of you did!
- Adults look after you very well, and you say you feel very safe in school.
- You are leading healthy lifestyles and show a very good understanding of how to stay safe.
- Your headteacher knows exactly what to do to improve and all staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

However, even though yours is a good school we think there are some things that would make it even better. Therefore we have asked your teachers to make sure that boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 try hard to stick with the activities that will help them to improve their reading, writing and number skills. We have also asked your teachers to help all of you to decide for yourselves how well you are doing and how you might improve.

Thank you again for being so helpful, keep up the good work and always remember to do your best.

Yours faithfully

Lois Furness Lead inspector