

# Dickens Heath Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133720
<b>Local Authority</b>	Solihull
<b>Inspection number</b>	328734
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marion Thompson

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	271
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Simon Bloxhan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Bird
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 December 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Three Acres Lane Dickens Heath Solihull B90 1NA

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 February 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	328734

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors. The school was closed due to snow on the second day of the inspection. During the first day, evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, the chair of governors, pupils and staff, visits to all classes, scrutiny of safeguarding documentation, observation of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime, and analysis of parents' questionnaires. The second day was spent analysing school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress, talking to senior staff, scrutinising pupils' work in detail and inspecting the safety of the school site.

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average school and Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. Other members of the school population come from a very diverse range of backgrounds. A very small number of pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A larger number of pupils than is usual leave or join the school during the academic year.

The school, which was newly built, opened in September 2002 to serve a new community in a newly built village. The governing body makes provision for before- and after-school care for pupils aged 4 to 11 and wrap-around care for children in the Nursery.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides an excellent education for its pupils. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent. The learning, interests and development of every child are at the forefront of all the school's activities. As a consequence, pupils love coming to school and enjoy, as one child put it, 'the challenging challenge' provided by most lessons.

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning, well above average attendance and very good behaviour support their rapid progress. From the earliest age, children begin to develop independence in learning and are made aware that they have a choice in the way they act. Older pupils are conscious of the rights and responsibilities they have as citizens. Personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. It is given a high value through the outstanding care the school provides. Pupils demonstrate high levels of consideration for each other. They support the small number of their peers who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, with great understanding. Above all, pupils value earning the 'Truly Trusted' badges, which are given to pupils for exceptional personal qualities.

Standards are high, especially in reading, mathematics and science, representing excellent achievement for pupils of all abilities from their above average starting points. Standards in writing are not quite as high, but are improving rapidly. One of the major reasons for pupils' excellent progress is the very effective use all staff make of information about pupils' progress. Teaching staff work together to identify pupils who are 'stuck' or slow-moving to find solutions, at the earliest stages. This has led to rapid improvements, for example in the quality of pupils' writing and mathematics and in the progress of individuals.

Academic guidance is excellent. Target setting is used to raise expectations about what pupils can do. Pupils now achieve, and frequently exceed, very challenging targets. Marking and feedback in class are very skilful. They provide extremely clear guidance to pupils on how to reach their targets. While supportive, this process is also demanding, raising pupils' expectations about the pace and level of work expected of them, as well as building their confidence.

Teaching and the curriculum are excellent and, in the vast majority of lessons, provide pupils with a high level of challenge and frequent very well planned opportunities to develop independence. Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted extremely effectively across the curriculum. For example, pupils produce high quality writing and interpret and present sophisticated mathematical data in science lessons. However, in the very small number of lessons which are good rather than outstanding, the level of challenge is a little lower, especially for the most able pupils, which slightly slows their learning. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities the school provides. There is a high level of participation in extra-curricular sport, which contributes to pupils' excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Throughout a period of constant change, the headteacher has maintained an unwavering focus on improving learning. Children's development 'each day, every day' is central to all staff. The headteacher sets high standards, so planning and self-evaluation, while demonstrating an in-depth knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, are a little over-critical. The senior team and teaching staff develop high levels of skills through astute coaching and productive professional dialogue. Governance is good. Governors make good use of their individual expertise to support the school and the level of challenge they provide is good and improving.

Through the excellent provision it makes for the needs of all pupils, the close and productive links with the local community and by developing pupils' understanding of global issues such as pollution, the school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the future and the school has excellent capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children start in Nursery with levels of skills above those expected for their age, but which represent the full ability range. A large number of children do not join the Early Years Foundation Stage until the Reception class. Achievement is excellent and many pupils start Year 1 with well above average standards. Children who have attended both Nursery and Reception make the most sustained and consistent progress. They are cared for extremely well. Very effective arrangements enable them to settle in quickly. Relationships are close and supportive, so that children make outstanding gains in personal and social development. Links with parents are very well developed. Children behave exceptionally well, have consistently positive attitudes and have the confidence to initiate activities. Excellent teaching ensures that children develop independence and make extremely rapid progress. Children with identified learning needs receive excellent support through carefully planned intervention programmes. Standards continue to rise as a result of the outstanding and reflective leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical skills have also improved significantly. Thorough and analytical assessment procedures effectively identify the next steps in learning. Staff are improving the range of resources and the overall quality of the outdoor area so that children have ready access to a more stimulating context for learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the achievement of the most able pupils by ensuring that they are consistently provided with a high level of challenge in lessons.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

By Year 6, standards are high and pupils' achievement is excellent. Reading is a particular strength. Most pupils read fluently and develop higher level reading skills, for example using evidence from the text to support their opinions. Standards in writing are improving rapidly. Pupils reach consistently high levels in mathematics and science, confidently undertaking work comparable with that of older pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress, because work is closely matched to their particular needs and interests. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who join the school late make very rapid progress, which is appreciated by their parents. In the vast majority of lessons, progress is rapid because marking is informative and challenging and the monitoring of pupils' work identifies underachievement at the earliest stages. However, occasionally, the level of challenge is not quite as high for the most able pupils so they make slightly slower progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, attend well and have excellent attitudes to learning. They take the school values of positivity, honesty, respect, trust and cooperation to heart and it shows in their courtesy, exceptional behaviour and the way they treat everyone with outstanding consideration, safety and care. Pupils show outstanding understanding and respect for the cultures, beliefs and traditions of people from different ethnic backgrounds. Many pupils take on responsibilities and carry them out conscientiously. For example, younger pupils on the eco-committee contribute effectively to improving the environment. All pupils take part in raising money for charities, such as providing clean water for people in Papua New Guinea. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and the great majority take part in at least one physical activity. Their exceptional progress in developing basic and social skills prepares them well for future life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

The great majority of teaching provides outstanding challenge for pupils. Lessons include a wide range of activities that interest and help pupils become involved in their learning. Fast pace, excellent relationships and calm lessons encourage pupils to concentrate very effectively and help them become confident, competent learners. Occasional inconsistencies in teaching mean that a few of the highest attainers are not always sufficiently challenged. However, the school is addressing this and developing especially challenging targets for the most able based on 'I can even...' The quality of support for pupils is outstanding. Classroom assistants know exactly what pupils' learning needs are. They provide sensitive help and specially chosen activities to help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Guidance is given in a style that successfully encourages pupils to improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is exceptionally well planned to meet pupils' changing needs, interests and aspirations. The links between subjects are particularly good, giving relevance to what pupils learn and helping them gain excellent personal and social skills. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent and supported by extensive links with external agencies. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are woven into all subject areas so that their importance is reinforced and pupils' competence in using them is consolidated. A rich variety of visits, visitors and activities helps enliven the curriculum and is highly valued by parents. For example, Year 5 pupils experience a residential visit to Dunfield where they write music, make costumes and do painting before giving their own dramatic presentation. The range of out-of-school activities is excellent and well supported by pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding pastoral care contributes strongly to pupils' excellent personal development. The school has exceptionally close partnerships with parents and external agencies, which are particularly supportive of pupils with identified learning needs. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Out-of-school care caters well for the needs of the local community. Academic guidance is outstanding. Staff know individual pupils extremely well. Their progress, both academic and personal, is monitored very closely to ensure that their welfare and learning needs are met. Pupils know what their targets are and learn how to evaluate their work and that of their friends in lessons. Marking and feedback given in lessons are excellent and provide supportive and challenging guidance on how to move work on.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior team, staff and parents, provides excellent leadership for the school. Planning is extremely good and is based on a thorough analysis of the school's work. Leaders of learning ensure that staff constantly focus on all aspects of pupils' progress and as a result, pupils reach and often surpass challenging targets. Governors provide good support and increasingly effective challenge for the school. They successfully promote community cohesion and carefully monitor how well the school is performing. Improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent.



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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?	1
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	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

6 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dickens Heath Community Primary School, Solihull B90 1NA

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. Some of your parents replied to our questionnaire, so please thank them. We know you are very proud of your school, so you will be delighted to hear that it provides you with an excellent education from Nursery right through to Year 6. Children in the Nursery and Reception class make excellent progress, because teaching and the programme of activities are extremely well planned and led. Children settle in very quickly because they are extremely well cared for.

In Years 1 to 6, you are doing very well. You are reaching high standards, especially in reading, and a lot of this is a result of the hard and very effective work of the headteacher and staff of the school. Staff keep a careful track of the progress you make and help you to catch up quickly if you fall behind. Almost always they set work that interests you and makes you think hard. They take excellent care of you and make sure you are safe. Marking and the guidance teachers give you in class are very good at showing you how to improve your work.

You play your part as well. You work very hard and attendance is well above average, so keep it up! You rise to the challenge of work that is a bit difficult for you. You take on a number of significant responsibilities, and that benefits everyone in school, and often in the wider community. Many of you love the extra-curricular activities and the breakfast and after-school clubs. You take great pleasure from your involvement in music and sport. You treat each other with respect and consideration and know a great deal about how to stay healthy. Your excellent skills in working with other people and high levels of skills in literacy and numeracy prepare you very well for the future.

In order to improve things further, we have asked the school to make sure that lessons always provide the same high level of challenge for you, especially if you find work easy.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy school as much as you do now.

Best wishes

Marion Thompson

Lead inspector