

Highfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108351
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	331523
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Pat Kime HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	135
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Mike McNestry
Headteacher	Mr Steven Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
School address	Whinfield Way Rowlands Gill Tyne and Wear NE39 2JE
Telephone number	01207 549882
Fax number	01207 549417
Email address	stevethompson@gateshead.gov.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited nine lessons and held meetings with staff, pupils and the chair of the governing body and talked with parents. She observed the school's work and looked at documents provided by the school, such as the school improvement plan and records of pupils' progress. The inspector also analysed the 35 questionnaires returned by parents and 11 questionnaires from staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' progress in Key Stage 1, particularly in writing
- the attainment of the more able pupils in Key Stage 2
- how well the school helps pupils to keep up if they are at risk of low attainment
- how well the curriculum is planned beyond the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

Information about the school

Highfield Community Primary School serves a community where there is considerable social and economic disadvantage and many pupils face difficulties in their lives.

The school has more pupils than when it was last inspected. It is over-subscribed and does not have room to meet the demand for places. More pupils join the school partway through their primary education than in most schools.

The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in its Nursery and Reception classes which are accommodated together in the Foundation Stage unit. There are 32 children in the Nursery who attend part-time, either mornings or afternoons, and 15 Reception children. The Nursery draws from a wider geographical area than the school so several children who attend the Nursery join other schools at the start of the Reception year. Childcare and before and after school care are available through close links with the on-site Children's Centre and Sure Start provision. This is not managed by the school and is therefore subject to separate inspection arrangements.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are taught in three mixed age classes, each of which covers two school years.

In April 2007 the school moved to a new building, built under the government's private funding initiative (PFI). Another primary school is housed in the same building and some of the facilities are shared.

The school holds the Activemark gold award and an Impetus award, and it has National Healthy School status.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	135	Smaller than average
Free school meals	42%	Well above average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	26%	Above average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	0%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	0%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	1%	Below average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils love coming to this happy, caring school where the staff make lessons such fun. The school is a rich and stimulating environment for learning. Pupils make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development. From a low starting point, the vast majority of pupils reach the standard expected for their age by the end of Year 6.

The school promotes equal opportunities well. It provides good additional teaching to help slower or less confident learners to keep up and to stretch the more able. It provides high quality support, guidance and care for vulnerable pupils.

The school has improved since it was last inspected. The impact of improved teaching is evident in the rising trend in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. The provision in the Foundation Stage unit has improved dramatically and children reach higher standards by the end of the Reception year. The improvements to date, along with the determination of staff to fulfil their high expectations for pupils, show that the school is well placed to continue improving and go from strength to strength.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 1.
- Refine the use of assessment data, at whole school level, in order to gain a more precise picture of pupils' progress in each school year and evaluate the school's performance even more sharply.
- Develop the curriculum further by:
 - ensuring that the plans to link work in the non-core subjects provide progression in all these subjects
 - developing the role of the subject leaders for the non-core subjects and providing more planned opportunities, across the curriculum, for pupils to develop understanding and appreciation of cultural, ethnic and racial diversity.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

The school enables pupils to make outstanding progress in developing key skills, particularly literacy and numeracy, and in their personal development. When they start in Nursery, most of the children can do much less than is usual for their age. By the end of Year 6 the vast majority reach the standard expected for their age.

- Children flourish in the Foundation Stage unit and come on in leaps and bounds. Children’s achievement has improved greatly over the last two years. Most of the children now reach the standard expected for their age by the start of Year 1. These higher standards mean that good foundations are now laid for raising attainment in Key Stage 1.
- In Key Stage 1 attainment is below average. Pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics and average progress in writing. The written work seen in the Year 2 pupils’ books was of a slightly lower standard than would be expected.
- In Key Stage 2 a concentration of particularly good teaching leads to outstanding progress. The work seen in Year 6 was nearly all at the level expected for the pupils’ age and around a third of the pupils are working at an advanced level in English and mathematics.
- The staff’s high expectations of all pupils shone out in most of the lessons seen. Staff are very successful in getting pupils to a level of attainment that will set them up for secondary education. For example, in last year’s group of leavers, the vast majority reached the expected level in English and three-quarters did so in mathematics, even though just over half the year group had learning difficulties. For many pupils, this attainment is hard won against a backdrop of considerable disadvantage.
- Expectations for behaviour are very clear and the ‘golden rules’ are consistent and high profile throughout the school. Consequently, in most lessons pupils’ are very well-behaved and this is an important aid to their learning.
- Pupils are well-informed about how to keep healthy. In response to the school’s questionnaire for pupils, 99% agreed with the statement. ‘I know how to be fit and healthy’. Pupils are keen to exercise and most attend some of the good range of sports clubs on offer after school. They remember the school’s drive on healthy packed lunches and they know well what makes a healthy diet. All the parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their children to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils’ moral and social development is very good but their spiritual and cultural awareness, though satisfactory, is less well-developed.
- Attendance has improved considerably and is now average.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

The staff at Highfield build excellent relationships with pupils and support them very well in their school work and personally. The bulk of the teaching, from teachers and teaching assistants, is of a high quality. Lessons are planned carefully to meet all pupils' needs. Staff ensure work is challenging but achievable and they recognise and value all pupils' achievements. Lessons are purposeful and staff often inject a great sense of fun into learning. The classrooms provide lively, vibrant environments for learning. These factors explain why pupils do so well.

- The use of assessment, lesson by lesson, to support learning is very well-developed with a good degree of consistency across the school. In most classes it is used very effectively and positively, with an emphasis on recognising and praising achievement in lessons and in the marking of pupils' work. Consequently, pupils usually know exactly what they are to learn in each lesson and how successful they have been and they take a good degree of responsibility for their own learning. This motivates them to try hard.
- In the most effective lessons seen, pupils were determined to succeed and applied themselves to work with great determination and intense concentration. Where the teaching was simply satisfactory the pace of learning was slower and pupils' books showed less effective marking and work that was less closely tailored to pupils' different learning needs.
- In order to raise attainment in the key skills of literacy and numeracy, the school has understandably concentrated first on improving the curriculum and teaching in English and mathematics. The success of this is clear from the standards of work seen in English and mathematics lessons.
- Staff have now begun to adjust the way the curriculum is planned and taught in the other subjects. They are trialling curricular planning that links work in several subjects and provides opportunities to apply key skills across subjects, for instance the work on 'Generation Green' in Years 5 and 6. The school knows that this planning will need further refinement to ensure that it enables pupils to make good progress in all these subjects and that opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of diversity permeate the plans across subjects.
- Pupils have full confidence that the staff will help them if they have problems

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

with their learning or in their lives.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's ambition for the pupils has influenced all aspects of the school's work and brought about improvement. Highfield is now an outward looking school. The enthusiastic staff team sets its sights high, creates a rich and vibrant environment for learning, and is continually seeking ways to do even better for pupils.

- The school has established a well-planned programme of regular assessments of pupils' attainment and progress in key skills. Staff use information from these assessments to identify pupils at risk of underachievement or low attainment and to plan suitable additional support for them. However, a sharper analysis of assessment data is needed to enable the school to get an even clearer picture of how effectively it meets the needs of all its pupils in each school year and lead to earlier action to check any slips in pupils' rate of progress.
- The determination of staff and their strong teamwork have been key factors in driving improvement to date. The planning for further development is sound but could be clearer about how success will be evaluated.
- In the core subjects leaders are active and effective but the leadership of other subjects is less well developed.
- The school nurtures its staff and helps them develop their skills. To take one example; the school has developed its own highly skilled teaching assistants by supporting them to qualify as higher level teaching assistants.
- Seven of the staff who returned the inspection questionnaire included letters to the inspector. They wrote of their high regard for the headteacher and of the improvements he has driven; how much they enjoy working at the school; how their views and contributions are valued; and the professional development opportunities they have benefited from.
- The school promotes community cohesion by providing a good range of opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life of the school and the local community. It prepares pupils well to succeed in life by ensuring they master key skills, learn about the world of work, and develop a good work ethic. Pupils learn about other countries and about world religions. However, they have limited opportunities to work with people from a range of backgrounds and develop their understanding of diversity.
- The school complies fully with government requirements for safeguarding pupils. All the parents who returned the questionnaire agreed that the school keeps their children safe.

Resources are used wisely to achieve excellent value for money. Staff are deployed thoughtfully so they can play to their strengths. Suggestions for improvement from pupils and parents are taken on board, for instance in the purchase of additional 'laptops'. The outdoor environment has been developed extremely well. It provides excellent facilities to promote exercise, such as the trim trail, and the storyteller's throne reflects the schools recent emphasis on reading.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in this stage has improved greatly since the last inspection. The Foundation Stage unit now provides a lively and attractive environment for young children to learn in. When children start in Nursery, many of them have limited skills and knowledge. For most of those who stay at Highfield for the Reception year, attainment on entry is well below what is typical for their age. By the end of the Reception year, their attainment is broadly in line with the standard expected for their age, though skills in early writing and mathematical calculation are less advanced than other areas of their learning. The staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of children this age. They have the highest expectations of what the children can achieve and the skill to enable them to do as well as possible. They provide a very good range of carefully planned, appealing activities which promote learning very successfully for all the children. The staff keep a very good check on each child's learning and match activities closely to their progress and interests. The unit leader enthuses staff and deploys them wisely. She has led the improvements over the last two years and has a very good grasp of what could be done to make the provision even better.

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 the children in the EYFS promoted?*	2

How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	1
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* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers have very high regard for the school and its staff. They believe it has improved a great deal under the leadership of the current headteacher, and they have confidence in the staff. They know that their children are happy at Highfield, are progressing very well in their school work and receive good pastoral care. They appreciate the approachability of staff and the way they are kept informed about school life and their children's progress. They are particularly pleased with the excellent Foundation Stage unit.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfield Community Primary School, Gateshead, NE39 2JE

I visited your school recently to see how well you are all learning. I enjoyed seeing so many exciting lessons and watching you trying so hard to do your work well. Thank you for making me feel welcome in your school and for talking about your work and life at Highfield.

Your school has improved. You are making excellent progress in your learning right from the start in Nursery. I was very pleased to see that most of you reach Level 4 by the time you leave and quite a few of Year 6 are already well on the way to a Level 5 in English and mathematics. These standards are a great achievement. You should be proud of how hard you work to reach them and so should the staff.

You do equally well in your personal development. You are growing up well, learning to keep healthy and safe and to make your contribution to school and the wider community. It was good to see how sensible and well-behaved you are.

The staff and the school's governors want to keep on improving the school. I have suggested that they concentrate on three things:

- helping you to do better at writing in Key Stage 1
- checking up on your progress even more carefully so they can see quickly if there are any dips
- planning changes to the way they teach subjects other than English and mathematics very carefully and making sure you have lots of opportunities to learn about the variety of cultures, religions and races in Britain and around the world.

I am sure that you will have good ideas to help improve the school and you will be able to suggest them through the school council. Do carry on enjoying school, trying for 100% attendance, working hard and growing up well.

I wish every one of you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector

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