

# Highfields Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103946
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	336202
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Dobbins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare provision, 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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	465
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sharon Wallace
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen Heap
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Beeches Road Rowley Regis B65 0DA
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 5591037
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 5615651
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:helen.heap@highfields.sandwell.sch.uk">helen.heap@highfields.sandwell.sch.uk</a>

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 March 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	336202

**Number of children on roll in the registered  
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered  
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent more than half of their time looking at learning, saw 16 lessons in whole or in part, observed 14 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They looked at data the school holds on pupils, and spoke with the local authority advisor linked to the school and with 25 parents and carers. They scrutinised 81 parent and carer questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether data on the pupils who leave the school this year support the trend of good attainment and progress seen over two of the last three years
- how effective the school is in helping lower attaining pupils with their learning
- how well are governors and subject leaders driving improvement.

## Information about the school

Highfields is a large school. About 70% of pupils are from a White British heritage and most of the others from an Asian heritage. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is much higher than average. More pupils than usual are eligible for free school meals. Over each of the last few years a substantial number of teachers have left the school, mostly to be promoted to more senior posts. There are three newly qualified teachers currently on staff. Since the last inspection the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have been away from school for three extended periods of time. During the time of their combined absence the school was led by a consultant headteacher. The school holds many awards including the Leading Parent Partnership Award, Activemark, the Healthy Schools Award and the local authority Leading Aspect award for provision for newly qualified teachers.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Highfields is a good school. Some aspects are outstanding. Overall, pupils make good progress in their learning and develop into well-rounded young people who, when they leave at the end of Year 6, are prepared well for later life. Parents are fulsome in their praise for the school, one parent saying that she 'is so glad that her son is at the school because not only is he learning so much, but he is growing up so nicely because staff expect the children to behave so well and to show respect to each other.'

Children enter the nursery with levels of skills below those expected for their age. Over their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage they make good progress in each of the early learning areas so that they join Year 1 with broadly average standards. Over Years 1 to 6 pupils thrive as learners and make good progress. When they leave school at the end of Year 6, they exceed national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Last year's leavers (2009) did less well in English than those who left in the previous two years. Senior leaders quickly noticed this and put vigorous plans in place, and the school's data predict that pupils currently in Year 6 will again exceed national expectations when they leave school. The good progress pupils make in their learning is the result of good teaching. Senior leaders are diligent in applying their excellent procedures for improving teaching and learning. These work very well and provide strong support for all teachers, but especially those who are newly qualified and those in the early years of their teaching careers.

The school is a vibrant, happy and caring place. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they say they feel very safe there. Their parents and carers agree with them. In a welcoming and supportive 'family' environment pupils behave well and make friends easily. In lessons they show by their good attitudes, and by routinely working hard to do their best, that they have fully accepted their role as learners. They gain a good knowledge of what is right and wrong and are helped in their development as young people by the many opportunities they have to contribute to the day-to-day running of the school, for example by taking responsibility as members of the school council, as peer mediators, buddies and prefects. They are very proud to be known as pupils at the school.

The senior leaders have very high expectations for the quality of their own work and are outstandingly good at providing opportunities for other staff to be equally effective in their work. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well through their effective procedures for self-evaluation and the excellent assessment procedures for recognising the progress of pupils. They are aware that teaching is not yet outstanding, because not enough teachers use this information to constantly fine-tune and adapt lesson activities in response to pupils' precise, differing individual needs. Driving up the quality of teaching and learning in English over the last year or so to reverse the dip

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seen in overall attainment is a clear example of their effectiveness and of their good capacity to sustain improvement. Staff talk enthusiastically about other good developments that have occurred since the last inspection, for example the broadening of pupils' learning experiences, and see the school as an exciting place to work.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by ensuring that teachers consistently plan for new learning to encompass prior learning, so that in more lessons progress against individual pupils' targets for learning is outstanding.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Pupils get on very well with each other. In a very safe and secure environment they prosper as learners and as developing young people. The good relationships they have with their teachers and teaching assistants help make lessons harmonious events that they fully enjoy. In most lessons pupils, including those whose grasp of English is limited and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress, and the standards seen in the older pupils' lessons and their books were above average. This is because planning recognises the learning needs of most of the pupils most of the time. Good management of the very competent teaching assistants provides quick and effective help when pupils are stuck. As a consequence, in most lessons learning overall is rarely too hard or too easy and the good progress pupils make is, often, smooth and sustained.

There are other contributors to the good gains pupils make in getting ready for the next stage of their education and life thereafter. They have many well-planned opportunities to learn to take responsibility. For example, they gain from taking seriously their responsibilities as prefects. Those who are members of the school council are very proud of their role in redesigning the Key Stage 2 playground and in creating the Captain's Table, where those whose good deeds have been recognised in the Golden Book sit together for lunch. They gain a good awareness of the needs of the wider world through fundraising for international charities. The relevance of this is made clear, for example through learning about the differences that sponsoring a well can make for the children living in a village in Zambia. The Activemark and Healthy Schools awards underpin the strong emphasis placed on ensuring that pupils know about and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The high take-up of after-school sports clubs and the regular choice of healthy foods at lunchtimes show that many pupils have already embraced these concepts.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

The Leading Aspect award in nurturing newly qualified teachers is an apt award for the school. Generally, newly qualified teachers prosper because the senior leaders' arrangements for evaluating teaching and learning and for providing well-targeted help for professional development are precise and very supportive. The good progress pupils make in their learning is testament to the overall good quality of teaching. However, school records show, as do lesson observations made during the inspection, that teaching is mostly good but is rarely outstanding. The elements to promote outstanding progress are in place. Teachers are competent and committed. Pupils are equally committed to their learning. The excellent procedures for assessing and recording what pupils know and can do provide real detail for planning lessons made up of learning opportunities that should be relevant to each pupil. But this information is not always used well enough in ensuring that learning is effectively consolidated and that new learning routinely encompasses on prior learning. As a result, in most lessons progress is limited to good. In the few lessons when progress is outstanding, pupils rush along with their learning because what they are doing is interesting and exciting for each of them, and provides them with exactly the right level of challenge.

Pupils are learning what is right for them, including having outstanding opportunities to broaden their perspective of their own world by experiencing people, places and activities that would normally not be available to them. For example last year, Year 6 pupils received visits from a troupe of Greek dancers, a potter, a horticulturalist, a professional golfer, a bridge builder and lifeboat men. They visited the Dudley and Birmingham museums, Wyre Forest, a sea life centre, Hadley Stadium, Barry island and

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took part in a residential visit to Holland. Pupils in each of the other years gained an equivalently wide range of enrichment experiences. All pupils can take part in the extensive programme of lunchtime and after-school clubs. These include recorder, ballroom dancing, geography and reading for pleasure and the many sports clubs. Most pupils learn to play a musical instrument, and the school's brass band is well known locally because of the concerts that are given and because they regularly play at various local venues over times of celebration, such as Easter and Christmas. These opportunities are much enjoyed by pupils. They make a substantial contribution to their learning and an important contribution to their development into well-rounded young people who are prepared well for their time in secondary education.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and pupils are quick to say that they feel very safe and valued in a welcoming and caring school. The support for pupils learning English as an additional language and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly well targeted and effective. The school provides an extensive programme of support activities for parents and carers to ensure, for example, that pupils attend regularly. They organise courses for parents and carers, including on literacy and numeracy, and provide help in dealing with issues of parenthood from supporting children's learning at home, on healthy eating and the management of finances. Parents and carers say they appreciate very much the way that the school welcomes them as partners and provides advice and support even on issues that do not always link directly with the work of the school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Senior leaders are a unified and powerful team. They are committed to making the school a place of excellence and over the time they have been together have shown that they have the knowledge and skills to continue to drive up improvement over all areas of the school. The excellent procedures for evaluating the progress of pupils and for knowing how good teaching is provide a solid base for setting targets for improvement, for example in attainment and progress and in the percentage of outstanding lessons. Staff morale is high and the strong belief in the leaders, and in the future of the school, is seen at every staffing level. Governors are committed and astute and have a clear knowledge of their role in moving the school to a position of excellence.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough because senior leaders and governors are

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assiduous in seeing that good practice is adopted. Due regard has been paid to community cohesion. Links with the local community are well established and take good account of religious and ethnic traditions. Through the Rowley Regis Learning Community pupils take part in, for example the local Children and Police Group and the school is valued as a place where mature students from the locality are placed as part of their training to become learning support assistants. The very strong links with parents and carers also contribute to making the school a cohesive community that is well respected locally.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle well. They are happy and feel safe in the Early Years Foundation Stage and quickly become comfortable and confident there. They enjoy taking a full part in the activities that are planned for them as well as playing on their own. They attend regularly and this helps them make good progress. Typically children enter the Nursery with low-level language skills. With the guidance of speech and language specialists, often supported by the effective contributions of parents and carers, children's communication skills develop well. As a consequence, they make good progress and join Year 1 having reached national expectations in language development and exceeded national expectation in the skills of early reading.

The good leadership and management are seen in many ways, such as the focus of the curriculum and the organised way in which it is presented to children through the availability of a good range of resources, although access to the outside area is limited to when children can be supervised in groups. Exceptionally good assessment



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procedures provide accurate records of children's progress over each area for learning, and are used well in planning for activities and for identifying children who require additional specialist help. Children gain quick and effective support, for example in learning English as an additional language or in dealing with a special educational need and/or disability. Good transition arrangements smooth children's transfer to Year 1. Parent and carers are united in their praise for the Early Years Foundation Stage, one parent telling an inspector, 'My son is having a good start here, you know.'

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Most parents and carers who spoke with inspectors or who responded to the questionnaire say they like the school very much because their children enjoy being there. They like the way the school keeps their children safe, the good teaching and especially the way in which the senior leaders and staff are always ready to help them in supporting their children's learning at home. They like the good progress their children make in their learning and in the way they are being prepared for their time in secondary education. A minority of parents and carers are concerned about the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked closely at this and judged that, when required, the procedures for improving the behaviour of individual pupils work well. The result of this is seen day to day as the school is a calm and well-ordered place.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highfields Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 81 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 465 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	65	26	32	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	64	29	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	51	35	44	4	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	54	36	45	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	48	41	52	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	50	40	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	45	43	54	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	39	42	58	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	42	44	56	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	33	42	53	10	13	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	33	46	64	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	34	45	40	53	2	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	52	38	47	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

# Glossary

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

## Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



10 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfields Primary School, Rowley Regis, B65 0DA

It was lovely for me and my colleagues to meet and talk with you when we visited your school. We found the school to be providing you with a good education. These are some of the things we especially liked.

You make good progress in your learning and in the way you develop as young people.

Each one of you can take an equal part in all the school's activities.

You told us you feel really safe and comfortable at school.

You behave well in lessons, work hard at your learning and get on very well with each other and your teachers.

You know the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

The senior leaders, with the help of all staff, are working really hard to keep on improving the school.

There is one thing I have asked to be made better. I would like your teachers to plan lessons even more carefully so that they help you to use the skills that you have already learned.

Each one of you can help to make your school even better by continuing to behave well in your lessons and by always trying to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

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