

# Highfields Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124211
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	340517
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gerald Griffin

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	224
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geoff Elton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Helen Poole
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Elder Lane Burntwood Staffordshire
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, governors and some parents. They observed the school's work, looked at progress records, teachers' lesson plans, school improvement plans, policies and reports. They analysed 92 pupils' questionnaires, 15 staff questionnaires, 125 parents' questionnaires, and undertook a case study of several pupils whose circumstances have the potential to make them vulnerable.

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

- the variable rates of progress made by boys and girls
- learning and progress at Key Stage 2
- the quality of the challenge that teachers provide to secure good progress
- the effectiveness of leaders' plans, for example to improve teaching, to accelerate progress and secure higher attainment.

## Information about the school

Highfields is an average sized school. Nearly all pupils are from White British families. There are several pupils who do not speak English at home as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs are lower than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school has recently been awarded Healthy Schools status and Dyslexia Friendly status.

**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?**

**3**

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

**3**

## Main findings

Highfields Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education within a welcoming, safe and caring atmosphere. The inspection found that:

- pupils' attainment is average and their achievement is satisfactory
- the learning and progress of pupils are satisfactory overall and improving, especially in reading
- pupils feel safe and secure in school and their behaviour is good
- pupils enjoy school and their attendance is outstanding
- teaching is typically satisfactory, but better in reading
- the curriculum is satisfactory
- all pupils, including those whose circumstances have the potential to make them vulnerable, are cared for very well
- pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities pupils and pupils who do not speak English at home as their first language receive good support
- parents are happy with the quality of education the school provides
- leadership and management are satisfactory.

Since the last inspection, the school has been through a difficult few years during which staff turnover was high. As a result, pupils in Years 3 to 6 were not achieving as well as they should have been. The school has successfully tackled inadequate teaching, secured a stable staff and is improving. The drive to raise attendance has been most effective. Provision in reading is effective and pupils' progress in the subject is now good. The progress of boys, which has been slow over recent years, has accelerated so that they now make satisfactory progress. These successes, combined with broadly accurate self-evaluation, mean that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

There are three key areas in which the school is not yet fully effective.

Teaching is not consistently good or better because it does not sustain a good level of challenge throughout lessons to ensure that pupils are always working hard. Usually this is because work does not match precisely the needs of each pupil, especially those who are more able. As a result, these pupils find activities too easy and so make satisfactory rather than good progress. Furthermore, teachers do not use the data they have on each pupil's progress in writing and mathematics consistently well to plan challenging next steps in their learning to ensure that they make good progress in these subjects.

Leaders do not use their challenging targets effectively to judge the success of improvement plans and to identify areas in need of further development. Additionally, not all subject leaders are fully accountable for standards in their areas of responsibility.

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The quality of the feedback pupils receive through marking is too variable. As a result, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do next to improve their work to quicken their progress.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to secure good progress by:
  - matching work closely to more able pupils' needs and abilities so that they are challenged well throughout lessons
  - making better use of progress data in writing and mathematics to plan effectively the next stage in pupils' learning.
- Sharpen school improvement by:
  - ensuring leaders use challenging targets rigorously to check the success of plans and pinpoint where further gains can be made
  - ensure subjects leaders take full responsibility for attainment and progress in their areas.
- Improve marking for pupils by:
  - ensuring pupils know precisely what they need to do to make their work better and so accelerate their rate of progress.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspection before their next Section 5 Inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

The lessons observed during the inspection were almost all of satisfactory quality. The standards seen in lessons and pupils' books were broadly average and showed that pupils were catching up with work missed from earlier years. In a few lessons seen, learning and progress were good. In one of them, at Key Stage 2, pupils made good gains in their understanding of how to solve complicated mathematical problems. Pupils were encouraged to use a range of strategies, including estimating and trial and error, to find their answers. Pupils made good use of the frequent opportunities to discuss their ideas in small groups to clarify their ideas, which accelerated their understanding. The more able pupils were provided with very complicated problems to solve, which meant they were working as hard as others in the class. In a satisfactory Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils were busy thinking of adjectives and similes that would give their story more interest. They enjoyed their learning and tried hard but they did not have enough opportunity to think about the quality of their own work and compare it to that of others to see how their writing could be improved further.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory for all groups, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who do not speak English at home as their first language. The gender gap is closing because the school has taken effective steps to engage boys more by providing work and resources that especially appeal to

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them. The small number of pupils whose circumstances have the potential to make them vulnerable achieve in line with their peers.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They reflect maturely on their feelings and those of others. Their clear understanding of right and wrong underpins their good behaviour. Occasionally the enthusiasm of younger pupils gets the better of them and they call out answers. They cooperate well in teams and readily share learning resources. Pupils have a deep respect for people who come from a background different from their own, although their understanding of the diversity of British culture is satisfactory.

Pupils say that bullying is rare and always dealt with quickly and effectively. Younger pupils know how to cross the road safely and older ones understand clearly how to keep themselves safe on the internet. Most pupils are committed to a healthy lifestyle, take plenty of exercise, and eat a healthy diet. They are keen to take responsibility, for example as members of the school council. They collect generously for charity and readily take part in community activities. For example, recently many of them joined pupils from other schools to sing in a regional Young Voices Concert, which they told inspectors they had thoroughly enjoyed. Positive attitudes, good social skills and average attainment mean that pupils' preparation for secondary school and future employment is satisfactory.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<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>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>
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## How effective is the provision?

There are many signs that teaching is improving. Teachers use computers and other resources well to engage pupils and promote their learning. Relations in lessons are positive and pupils are keen to learn. However, teachers do not consistently ensure they plan work that sustains good progress for all ability groups, especially the more able. While they use progress data well to plan reading lessons, their use of it to plan those in writing and mathematics is not as effective. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who do not speak English at home as their first language.

Pupils have a good understanding of the levels they must reach. However, they are not all sure about how to improve their work to reach their targets because teachers' marking does not consistently provide pupils with specific advice on what they need to do next to make their work better.

The curriculum supports aspects of personal development well. For example, information and communication technology lessons develop pupils' clear understanding of staying safe on the internet. The curriculum supports reading well. It does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to improve weaker aspects of their writing and mathematics, such as writing in different styles and speedy calculation. A wide range of out-of-school clubs and educational visits add to pupils' enjoyment of school, broaden their horizons and raise ambition.

Staff use their detailed knowledge of each child expertly to provide an outstanding level of pastoral care. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive sensitive support and learning programmes that enable them to take a full part in the life of the school. The needs of pupils who do not speak English at home as their first language are carefully assessed so that the support they receive in learning English is effective. The school's targeted support for pupils whose circumstances have the potential to make them vulnerable is effective. For example, pupils who have behavioural difficulties receive effective guidance that ensures they are not excluded from school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

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The staff enthusiastically embrace the headteacher's unrelenting drive to improve the school. Improvement planning is not yet good because the leadership does not use the school's challenging targets robustly to judge the effectiveness of plans and to identify areas that need further development and to hold staff to account for the quality of their work. Not all subject leaders are accountable for pupils' attainment, learning and progress in their areas. Leaders have been proactive in sharpening teachers' skills. For example, training has improved their lesson planning so that it meets the specific needs of boys. The governors are supportive of the school and their developing understanding of data means that they are not afraid to challenge the school over its performance.

Child protection procedures are robust and of high quality and fully meet current safeguarding requirements. Systems are effective in ensuring that pupils are safe. The checks that the school makes on the suitability of adults to work with children and pupils are most rigorous.

The school is thoroughly committed to ensuring equal opportunities and ensuring all pupils make the best progress possible. The currently satisfactory progress of pupils overall shows plans are not consistently effective as yet.

The school has evaluated its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context thoroughly, and the contribution it makes to community cohesion is satisfactory. The work it has undertaken in helping families to support their children's education at home is having a positive impact in school, which is a happy and harmonious community. The school is developing links with a local school with a diverse ethnic intake and video conferencing with pupils in a school in France, which are starting to provide pupils with an insight into communities that are different to their own.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>



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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception class, and boys and girls do equally well. Children really enjoy school. They are polite to each other and to adults and their personal, social and emotional development is good. Children are well cared for and are very safe in the classroom and the outdoor learning area. Parents appreciate the regular and detailed feedback they receive about their children's progress.

Teaching is satisfactory. There is an appropriate balance of activities led by adults and those chosen by children. The outdoor learning area is used appropriately, for example in promoting children's gaining of independence and in developing their physical abilities. However, children's writing development lags behind other areas of their learning because staff do not provide enough opportunities for them to form letters and make marks.

Staff are provided with effective training to sharpen adults Early Years Foundation Stage teaching skills. The progress of boys was slow in the past and plans to improve their progress, for example by providing more learning through physical activity, have been successful. While development plans are appropriate and ambitious, the school sometimes takes too long to implement them, which slows the pace of improvement.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

Over half of all parents and carers completed a questionnaire, which is a relatively high return. Additionally inspectors talked to parents and carers at the school gate to seek their views. They are supportive of the school. They say their children enjoy school and that they are happy with the standard of care the school provides. They feel the school is led and managed well. Inspectors agree with these positive comments. Several parents and carers have concerns about the progress their children are making.

Inspectors found that progress has been slow for some pupils in the past but is now satisfactory overall. There are signs that it is improving, especially in reading where it is good. Inspectors agree that progress is not yet good in writing and mathematics. A few parents and carers voiced worries about behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be often outstanding in lessons and good overall. Some parents and carers would like more help to support their children's education. Inspectors found that the school does provide

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effective parenting courses. They noted that the school has firm plans to expand this help in the future.

## 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 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 224 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	50	57	46	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	62	50	60	48	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	37	70	56	8	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	32	69	55	9	7	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	44	35	70	56	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	30	71	57	9	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	44	62	50	5	4	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)	47	38	62	50	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	34	68	54	6	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	30	72	58	10	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	31	67	54	10	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	34	71	57	3	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	43	48	43	9	8	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 pupil's 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.**



12 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfields Primary School, Burntwood, WS7 9BT

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and having the opportunity to talk to some of you and to see you in lessons and at play. I especially enjoyed hearing your enthusiastic carol singing in assembly. You are rightly proud of the school's happy atmosphere in which you all get on so well together. We think that Highfields is a satisfactory school and that it is improving. Here are some of the things we found out.

Your teachers ensure that you make steady progress from Reception through to Year 6.

You make reasonable progress in writing and mathematics but do well in reading.

You really enjoy school and feel very safe and secure.

Your attendance is outstanding.

Your behaviour is good.

You have good relationships with your teachers and you try hard for them.

The curriculum provides you with exciting clubs and visits, which you enjoy.

Adults look after you very well and are always ready to help you.

The headteacher and staff are working hard to make the school get better.

We have asked the school to do three things to help you do even better in your learning.

Make sure teachers keep you all working hard, including those of you who learn quickly, so that you make better progress.

Use school targets to check how well the school is improving and ensure leaders give the headteacher plenty of help.

Tell us precisely what you need to do to improve your work and improve your progress.

You can help the school by continuing to try your best in lessons and behaving well.

We wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gerald Griffin

Lead inspector

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