



Highfields Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130258
LEA Leicester City
Inspection number 282132
Inspection dates 2 May 2006 to 3 May 2006
Reporting inspector Barbara Crane AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Pluto Close
School category	Community		Highfields
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Leicester, Leicestershire LE2 0UU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0116 2531382
Number on roll	275	Fax number	0116 2621651
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jane Ridgewell

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Highfields is a very ethnically diverse, average sized primary school close to the centre of Leicester city. The school serves an area of considerable social and economic disadvantage and just under half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Pupils' attainment when they start school is very low. Over three quarters of the pupils are learning English as an additional language, with over a third at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified for specific support because of learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. The level of mobility amongst pupils is high and is exceptionally high at the top end of the school. In last year's Year 6, for example, only half of the pupils started at the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed permanently to their posts in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Highfields is a satisfactory and improving school. This reflects the school's view of its effectiveness. It gives satisfactory value for money. The school is a welcoming, inclusive and harmonious community that nurtures pupils' good personal development through good care, support and guidance. Parents are pleased with the school and the way it serves the needs of its community.

From an exceptionally low starting point, pupils' achievement is satisfactory, even though standards are still very low by the time they leave the school. Satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage means that children get a secure start. Recent initiatives to improve assessment are starting to improve progress but children's different abilities are not always recognised and fully catered for. Throughout the school, pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make good progress because of effective intervention and support. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress because of good teaching that meets their needs. Teaching is satisfactory, but lacks challenge for more able pupils, who should be doing better. Assessment information is not used consistently to boost learning through setting and sharing individual targets with pupils. Day-to-day assessment through marking is also inconsistent in how well it helps the pupils to improve. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) very effectively across the curriculum. However, planning for them to use skills in writing and mathematics is not as good and this restricts their progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior management team has been established for just over a year and, through the good leadership of the headteacher, is providing a clear direction for improvement. The school knows what it needs to do to raise pupils' achievement further and there is good planning for improvement. This is based on an accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses. There has been good progress since the last inspection, particularly in improving provision for ICT, and the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessments are used to plan work that is more challenging for more able pupils throughout the school.
- Ensure that pupils know their targets and how to reach them.
- Improve the quality of teachers' marking so that it provides better guidance for pupils.
- Give pupils better opportunities to use and improve their writing and mathematics skills in other subjects

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English also make good progress in all classes. This is because of careful assessment of pupils' needs and good teaching for these groups. However, more able pupils throughout the school should be doing better. Too often, they do the same work as others and this restricts their progress.

Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress. They start from a very low base and few meet the standards expected in most areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1. However, all children make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. There has been an overall improvement in standards in Year 2 over the last three years, even though standards are very low. For Year 6 pupils, standards have varied from being exceptionally low to below average over the past five years. The high mobility of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is a contributory factor. When mobility is at a more average level, such as in 2004, standards improve to just below average. The school meets its targets, which are suitably challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. They look forward to being with their friends and say that they enjoy lessons because teachers help them and explain things clearly. Pupils work happily together, whatever their ethnicity or backgrounds. They are polite, helpful and willingly take on responsibility, such as junior road safety officers. The school council and a group that works on environmental issues make a good contribution to the community by gathering others' views and helping the school to improve. Attendance is satisfactory and the school works hard to reduce unauthorised absence, which is high because of extended holidays taken in term time. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and at play. They are pleased that good behaviour, like good work, is recognised and rewarded. Pupils say that bullying is rare at the school and that they have confidence that adults will deal with it if it arises. Pupils learn a good range of skills to help them in their future lives, such as working in teams or using computers. They know how to keep safe and live healthily. Many pupils take part in sporting activities outside the normal school day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The staff work hard to ensure all pupils, regardless of their different backgrounds, are involved in activities and a sense of

mutual respect is very well established. Pupils' behaviour is managed very effectively. Very good relationships create an atmosphere in which pupils feel valued. This is firmly established in the Foundation Stage, where children quickly gain confidence and learn that working and playing together makes life more enjoyable.

Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English benefit from good teaching and support from bilingual teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because the assessment of their needs is sharp and support is tailored to enable them to reach their targets. Teaching does not, however, consistently expect enough of the more able pupils and assessments are not used as well to ensure that work is challenging these pupils to do their best. Whilst there are examples of teachers providing good guidance through marking that help pupils understand how to improve their work, this is not consistent across the school. Teachers use ICT very well to make lessons lively and provide good opportunities for pupils to air their views and extend skills in speaking. Pupils appreciate the clear explanations given by teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and enriched by a good range of clubs and additional activities in sport and the arts outside normal lessons. These support pupils' personal and social development very well and pupils look forward to taking part. Good planning enables pupils to gain a good understanding of how to relate to others, deal with problems, stay safe and lead healthy lives. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good, but opportunities for pupils to use their skills in writing and mathematics are not planned to enable them to extend their skills in relevant situations in subjects such as history or science. From the Foundation Stage onwards, the curriculum is mostly planned so that learning is promoted smoothly from year to year. It is not, however, always well adapted for more able pupils and there are times when mundane activities are planned that limit their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good care, guidance and support lead to good inclusion of pupils and their well-being. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are good. Child protection procedures are robust. Adults take a real interest in the pupils as individuals and know their families well. Good links are established with home, right from the time children start school and parents are given good information about how to help their children at home. The support for groups of pupils with identified needs is well organised and effective and the school uses advice from outside agencies well. Pupils who join the school other than at the normal times are helped to settle in quickly. The system for setting targets for pupils to improve their learning is at an early stage of implementation. As a result, not all pupils are sure of their targets and what to do to reach them. The expertise of staff in providing support in community languages is very well used to promote pupils' learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good, determined leadership that focuses firmly on raising pupils' achievement and improving teaching and learning. Morale is high and the staff willingly take on new ideas. The new leadership team works well together and has introduced systems so that the school is better able to track pupils' performance and identify where improvements are needed. Some initiatives, such as target setting for individual pupils, have not had time to bear fruit because they are not firmly embedded. There has not been the opportunity to check their impact on learning, particularly for more able pupils. Governance is satisfactory and governors are kept well informed. They know that their ability to ask challenging questions needs developing.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good and there is good capacity to further improve. Good self-evaluation has meant that the important things have been tackled first. As a result, pupils' overall progress, taking into account their particular circumstances, has improved year on year for the last three years. Parents and pupils' views are well considered and used to bring about improvement, for example in setting up a library of family learning resources.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking with you. This is what we found out that makes your school a special place.

You told us that you enjoy school because it is a happy place where everyone gets on very well together. You are growing up as sensible and responsible young people. You behave well and help to improve things through the school council and the environmental group, as well as helping around school.

Most of you do as well as expected in your work but it is sometimes a bit too easy for some of you.

The staff take good care of you and make sure that everyone gets the chance to join in with things. There are plenty of clubs and activities that you enjoy.

Those of you who get extra help do particularly well.

You need more help to remember what your targets are and how to improve your work when teachers mark it.

You love working with computers and use them all the time in different subjects, but you do not always get the chance to use what you have learned in writing and mathematics in other subjects.

The people in charge of your school want the best for you and know what they need to do to make things better. You can help them by continuing to work hard.

You are a credit to your school. All the very best for the future and thank you again for your help.