

Highfield Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116395
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	290521
Inspection dates	12 - 13 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Sudworth

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

Type of School	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Hale
Headteacher	Mr A G King
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002
School address	Hawthorn Road Highfield Southampton SO17 1PX
Telephone number	02380 555793
Fax number	02380 399703

Age group	4 - 11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This one-form entry school is on a split site. The infant department is accommodated in the original Victorian building half a mile from the junior department. Pupils in the infant department are in mixed-age classes. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Pupils are mostly drawn from the immediate neighbourhood of the school. A smaller percentage of pupils than in most schools have learning difficulties and disabilities. Approximately two-fifths of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, a much higher percentage than in most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school with a history of exceptionally high standards and a strong tradition of inclusion. Outstanding leadership and management, combined with a high level of compassion, care and a clear focus on pupils' progress, ensure it provides an excellent education for all its pupils. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most reach standards above those expected in all areas of learning. Pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 6 and standards continue to be exceptionally high. Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, taking swift action on any individuals who are not fulfilling their potential, ensures that the staff get the best out of each pupil.

Parents are quite rightly very delighted with the education that their children receive. They think most highly of the school and are extremely supportive of it. Significant numbers of parents speak glowingly of the way that their children have thrived at the school and the excellent progress that they have made. A parent writes, 'There are always exciting things happening in the school linked with the children's learning which engage them and improve their learning experiences.' This is because of the outstanding curriculum, including the Foundation Stage curriculum, which excites the pupils, creates good links between subjects and provides a variety that never stands still. It keeps pupils' minds active and very interested in their learning. One pupil said, 'They challenge our brains with really interesting problems.'

The school produces well rounded, happy and well behaved children effectively prepared to lead fulfilling lives. Despite the distance between the two sites, it retains a strong family feel. The considerable amount of voluntary help from parents, the church and others, such as university students, adds to the sense of community and pupils' involvement in it. Communication and the partnership with parents are excellent. The school actively listens to parents' views and genuinely regards them as partners in education. Parents are kept fully involved in their pupils' progress and enabled to support their children at home. These very strong links are a major factor in pupils' very good attitudes to work and their high ambitions.

Staff's outstanding, care, support and guidance enable pupils to feel very secure in school. Pupils value staff very highly. 'We feel that they make a huge difference,' they say. Teaching and learning are outstanding and contribute significantly to the high standards and exceptional progress. Teachers have high expectations for each child's development both as a person and as a learner. This is achieved through robust assessment systems, very good relationships, a natural discipline, and a real vigour in pursuit of high standards. For example, the school recognised that standards in writing could be higher by Year 2. It has taken swift action on this and there are already clear signs of improvement. Pupils respond very well in lessons and become totally involved in their learning. Year 1 and 2 pupils, for example, had great fun as groups performed different scenarios from the sinking of the Titanic.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is reflected in their keenness to learn, their mature judgements and in their sensitivity towards others. They have an excellent understanding of safe and healthy living. Pupils fully understand what is expected of them and they rise to the challenge. Rigorous attention to detail in all types of planning has led to the school making very good progress since the last inspection. This thoroughness, together with the excellent leadership and the outstanding quality of provision, indicate that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Fulfil the initiatives in the school improvement plan with a particular emphasis on the plan to improve standards in writing in Years 1 and 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Attainment on entry is usually above that found in most schools, although with some diversity from year to year. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and almost all reach a standard above that expected for the end of Reception in all areas of learning. Their good progress continues in Years 1 and 2, despite an increase in the number of pupils with little English, although progress in writing has not been as strong as other aspects of English. Nevertheless, results at Year 2 are above average in English overall, mathematics and in science. Progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 and pupils achieve extremely well. They reach exceptionally high standards. In the recent national tests, the provisional results show that all pupils reached the expected level. Almost two-thirds were successful in reaching the higher level in English and mathematics and nearly three-quarters in science. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and English as an additional language achieve very well because of the very good teaching support provided for them and the very close analysis of their progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as shown by their well above average attendance. Typical of others, one pupil said 'I can't pick out my best lessons. I enjoy them all.' Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are very mature in thought and action. They raise money for various charities, often through their own ideas, and support a continuing project in Kenya. Pupils are helped to explore, understand and think about their faith. They contribute to the 'reflective corners' in each class where they add their ideas for prayer. They have a very good understanding of keeping themselves safe, such as not talking to strangers. The school councils are active. The infant council's ideas have resulted in timetabling playground games to secure safer playtimes. Pupils appreciate celebration assemblies of their good work. As one pupil said 'If it isn't you who gets the award, you can say well done to other people.' They have a very good understanding of how to live healthily, 'five fruit and vegetables a day', and through regular exercise. Pupils' opinions of their education contribute to the effective procedures for monitoring teaching and learning and to further improvements.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Excellent relationships with pupils create a very good atmosphere for learning. Teachers' very good use of resources and imaginative ideas really stimulate pupils' thirst for learning. Able Reception and Year 1 pupils were being introduced to the term 'density' as they saw how different liquids sank and floated in relation to each other. Teachers know the pupils' capabilities precisely and have high expectations of them. Year 2 able pupils, for example, were being introduced to equivalent fractions. The teaching of pupils at an early stage of learning English or with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good because of very precise teaching based on a thorough analysis of their needs. Well trained teaching assistants support pupils with specific learning difficulties most effectively.

Questioning is of a very high quality, challenging pupils to explain their thinking. Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to negotiate ideas and pupils work very well in groups to formulate responses. Marking is thorough and supports pupils' future learning very effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a very imaginative and thoroughly planned curriculum ensuring work is not repeated in mixed-age classes. Pupils pose questions about things that they think will interest them in the work that teachers have planned and teachers follow up the pupils' suggestions. This gives pupils a sense of ownership, arouses their curiosity and helps to sustain their interest. Regular visits to places of interest, such as to an environmental centre, add purpose and meaning to learning. Extra-curricular provision is excellent. It caters for a wide range of interests and abilities and unusually includes Latin and orienteering clubs. Very good opportunities for sport contribute very well to pupils' healthy living. Very effective links are made between subjects. Year 3 pupils improved their skills in reading metric scales as they made Egyptian cakes linked to their historical studies. Pupils particularly enjoy themes, such as 'Dragons Week' which promote their creative development and stimulate their imaginations. Provision for pupils whose first language is not English or who have learning difficulties is excellent. As a result, their needs are extremely well met.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care is exceptional. Staff as well as pupils feel very well cared for. Health and safety and child protection arrangements are very thorough and are standing items at staff meetings. All staff have regular training in these matters and are well informed. The school has an abundance of regularly trained first-aid personnel at both sites. Staff and pupils have been taught how to manage stress and absence is low. Very good support from the church provides added pastoral care. Excellent links with a range of professional agencies support most effectively those pupils who have medical concerns, or those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, so that they make the best possible progress.

Assessment arrangements are very thorough and consistent throughout the school so that individual pupils are known extremely well. Pupils' progress is tracked very regularly and most effectively. Targets for pupils' individual improvement are applied very well throughout the school and help each pupil to understand how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

This is an extremely well led and well managed school. The headteacher forms an excellent working partnership with senior staff in managing the difficulties of a split site. Their combined leadership is outstanding. The very clear focus on standards in all that the school does is reflected in pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and exceptionally high standards by Year 6. Subject leaders monitor teaching and learning very effectively through thorough examination of teachers' planning, pupils' work and by seeking pupils' views about their learning. It very clearly improves the quality of classroom provision and leads to consistency in practice. Staff are held to account for individual pupils' progress yet always in a supportive way. It results in very well coordinated action for pupils who have stalled in their learning so that the reasons can be identified and procedures quickly put in place to secure improvements.

The work of the governing body is good. The governing body is well structured and its systems help governors to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Individual links between governors and specific classes assist the school's pastoral concern for pupils.

Self-evaluation is very thorough and accurate, and whole-school planning considers a wide range of views so that the priorities are the correct ones. The school development plan is excellent. It provides a very clear steer to further improvements and identifies the steps that will lead to successful completion of each initiative.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

3 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highfield Church of England Primary School, Southampton, SO17 1PX

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school. I was most impressed by what I saw. Your school is an outstanding one and provides an excellent education for you. You are justly very proud of it. It prepares you very well for the future. You reach exceptionally high standards by Year 6, although standards in writing by Year 2 could be higher. You very clearly enjoy school. You have very good relationships with one another and you are also very thoughtful about the needs of others. Your support for a village in Kenya and your shoe collection project for Malawi are most exciting projects helping those who are in great need. Your school councils are very helpful in suggesting ideas to improve the school. I was also most interested in the way that you suggest ideas that you would like to be followed up in your studies. This helps to keep you interested.

The staff look after you extremely well and take a close interest in each of you to make sure that you all make the best possible progress. The teachers make your lessons extremely interesting and often excite you with the activities that they plan for you. They have high expectations of you and you respond extremely well. You have an excellent range of activities after school. I was very interested to learn about the Latin and orienteering clubs. You have a very good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and healthy and enjoy the good opportunities for sport in school.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Your headteacher leads the school extremely well and has the excellent support of senior staff in managing the two buildings which make up your school. They have the excellent support of all the staff.

I wish you all well for the future and hope that you achieve the ambitions that some of you spoke about. Keep on working hard.

All good wishes,

Peter Sudworth
Lead inspector