



Houghton Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110680
LEA CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278486
Inspection dates 22 November 2005 to 23 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. John MesserLI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chapel Lane
School category	Community		PE28 2AY
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01480 463398
Number on roll	180	Fax number	01480 462774
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Helen Boothman
Date of previous inspection	None	Headteacher	Mrs. Clare Stimpson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most primary schools. There are more boys than girls. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. Attainment on entry is average. Half of pupils live outside the area and attend this school through parental choice. More pupils than average enter or leave part way through this phase of their schooling. Nearly all pupils are from White English speaking families but a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small number of pupils speak languages other than English but none are at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Inspection findings confirm the school's accurate self-evaluation that this is a good school. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and here they make excellent progress, especially in personal development. Most are likely to attain the learning goals that they are expected to reach by the end of reception. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils make mostly good progress in Years 3 to 6 but some pupils, especially boys, do not make enough progress in writing. Reading is particularly strong. However, pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not have sufficiently clear or challenging targets to help them or their parents to understand how they can reach the next stages in their learning. Teaching in the reception class is excellent and it is good in Years 1 to 6. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the good quality of teaching and learning. Standards are high, being significantly above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. The school manages its finances well and provides good value for money. Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive. There have been many improvements since the last inspection. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

What the school should do to improve further

- Introduce changes that help pupils, especially boys, to improve their writing.
- Devise clear targets for pupils in Years 3 to 6 that help them to understand exactly what they should do to reach the next stages in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, more able learners and those who speak English as an additional language, generally make good progress. Although progress in English is good overall, a small number of pupils, mainly boys, do not make as much progress in writing as they should in Years 3 to 6. Children enter the school with attainment that is average and leave with standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science. Children's achievement in the reception class is exceptionally good. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards are significantly above average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. This was reflected in the national test results for pupils in Year 2 in 2005. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6 and the test results for pupils in Year 6 in 2005 show that standards were above average in English and significantly above average in mathematics and science. In some year groups, especially between Years 3 and 6, the number of pupils entering or leaving during the year is

exceptionally high and this applied particularly to Year 6 pupils taking the tests in 2005. In this school the number of pupils taking the tests is small and therefore statistics should be treated with caution. Teachers remind all groups what they should do to improve their work but specific and challenging targets are not set. Therefore pupils do not always have a clear understanding of what they must do to reach the next stages in their learning. Pupils are well motivated and keen to succeed and these positive attitudes to learning help them to make good progress.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development is good. It is fostered exceptionally well in the reception class. The school is passionate about providing good, varied opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff share a long-term vision to prepare pupils for life rather than just preparing them to pass tests. Behaviour is very good and pupils are sensitive to the needs of others. Attendance is good. Pupils' social development is nurtured well. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, show initiative and work together. They are urged to reflect on how successful their learning has been. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures; fostered through the school's good links with a school in Cameroon. Pupils exchange letters, which effectively promotes understanding of how people live in different countries. Pupils are encouraged to get as much fresh air and exercise as possible. Good food is available at lunchtimes and careful attention is paid to keeping pupils safe and happy. Community involvement is strong and the school fulfils its key role at the heart of the village. The good key skills that most pupils develop in reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology make a good contribution to their future economic well-being. Pupils have a good understanding of how to look after themselves and stay safe.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Teaching is excellent for pupils in the reception class and children rapidly learn new skills and gain new knowledge. Here children are encouraged to make choices and become closely involved in the direction of their learning. Children speak confidently and are eager to express their opinions. In Years 1 to 6 the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. New skills are taught systematically but activities to stimulate writing are not always exciting enough. Teachers involve pupils in assessing how effective their learning has been.

At the beginning of lessons teachers give pupils a clear description about what they expect each group to learn. Towards the end of each session teachers work with pupils to consider how effective learning has been. This helps pupils to understand how much progress they are making. However, pupils do not have specific targets to help them to understand what they need to do to reach the next steps in their learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Teaching assistants are well trained, work together as a team and contribute strongly to the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers and support staff are especially good at encouraging pupils' self-esteem. As a result pupils are developing confidence in their ability to learn effectively.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Pupils enjoy a rich and well-balanced curriculum. A strength, especially for younger children, is the creative use of outdoor learning. This provides some outstanding opportunities for practical activities that help children to become adept at thinking through situations to solve problems. Staff consider at great length the suitability of what they are offering and are not afraid to try new ways of promoting effective learning. For example, one lesson each week is purely dedicated to the investigative side of mathematics. There is a strong focus on offering speaking and listening opportunities designed to give pupils more confidence in using language. The school is the heart of the village. Many places of local interest are used well as a stimulus for work, for example in history and geography. Collaborative work with other local primary schools allows the school to pool and share expertise and gives the school exciting chances to take part in learning projects, training, arts and music festivals.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

The quality of care, support and guidance is good. The school extends support to families who are experiencing difficult times. Its support for pupils from families in crisis is a particular strength of the school and staff have developed high levels of expertise. This was a focus for their work as a 'Health Promoting School'. Pupils form strong friendships and support each other well. Teachers discuss with pupils what they will be learning and pupils like being involved in this way. Teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils to meet these. The next step is to develop specific targets to help pupils understand how to improve their performance. Child protection procedures are clearly understood by all staff and the school takes to heart the needs of those pupils who have difficult circumstances to cope with. They provide a secure, safe, caring environment and pay close attention to pupils' well-being.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher works closely with her deputy to give clear direction to the work of the school. Subject leaders and the Foundation Stage co-ordinator have a good understanding of how to create stimulating situations and are keen to introduce new initiatives to make learning even more effective. Following government guidance, the staff are engaged in developing ideas to make the curriculum all the more exciting. Finances are managed well. The governors are closely involved in the school's self-evaluation procedures. The school monitors its performance closely and accurately identifies areas for improvement. Its analysis showed, for example, that pupils' progress in writing was not as strong as in other subjects and that this applied particularly to boys. It has started to address the issue by finding ways to make writing more appealing. Parents are kept well informed about school issues, such as the new marking policy, and their views on new initiatives are taken into account. There have been many improvements since the last inspection and the school has good capacity to improve further.

Grade: 2

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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?	2	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	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	2	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?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	2	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	2	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	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

We enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful. This is what we thought about your school. Houghton Primary is a good school where all the adults work hard to help you learn useful things. The children in the reception class enjoy excellent opportunities to find out about how things work and how to make things. They are good at solving problems and like to make their own choices about what activities to do next. They love working outside in the playground. You learn to read extremely well and you are good at mathematics and science. Most of you are good at writing. You use computers well to find information and to write stories. You are good at making friends and help each other considerately. You behave very sensibly and are interesting to talk to. You understand how to stay safe and healthy. Your headteacher and the deputy headteacher work well together to think up new ways to make learning exciting. The headteacher is a good leader and she works closely with all the adults to organise the school well. All staff listen to your opinions and take great care of every one of you. The school spends its money sensibly so that there are enough adults to help you and there is all the equipment that you need in lessons. We think that there are two things that the school needs to do to make things even better. We know that some of you do not make as much progress as you could in writing and you could produce better work. So we have asked the teachers to think about how they can encourage you to get even better at writing. We also think it would be helpful if you had a much clearer understanding of exactly what you should do to reach even higher standards. So we have asked the teachers to think about giving you very clear targets to help you to know exactly what you need to do to make even better progress. We wish you all every success in the future.