

Heather Avenue Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120916
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380132
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	John Mason

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Wigg
Headteacher	Sheela Bream-Hardy
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Mason

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Eight lessons or parts of lessons were observed and all teachers present during the inspection were seen teaching at least once. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, members of the governing body and two groups of pupils, one of which read to the inspector. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, its development planning, a range of policies and records, minutes of the governing body, curricular planning and documents relating to the care and safety of pupils. The inspector also took account of the 45 parental questionnaires submitted.

Information about the school

Heather Avenue Infant is smaller than most infant schools and mainly serves the immediate community. Most pupils spend their whole infant education at the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is low, but increasing. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average, but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is very small. Shortly after the last inspection the school changed from being a first school to an infant school.

The provision includes the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in the Reception class. The school has a privately run nursery on site, the inspection of which is reported separately. The school's work has been recognised by the British Council Full International School award, Arts Mark Gold, Healthy Schools (Enhanced) status and the Eco-School (Silver) award.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. Pupils make rapid progress in their learning and develop excellent highly positive attitudes. They engage in a wide range of activities, in the arts and in sports, enabling them to develop excellent social skills, a strong basis for deeper cultural understanding, and clear moral and spiritual values.
- Pupils’ achievement is outstanding. By the end of Year 2 pupils are on average four terms ahead of other children of their age in their mathematical understanding and over three terms ahead in their reading and writing.
- Teachers have an expert knowledge of teaching techniques and apply these creatively across the whole curriculum. Teachers use imaginative approaches which engage pupils to think with growing independence about their learning. Marking is thorough. Pupils are ambitious to achieve their targets and teachers use assessment data very well to adapt planning and provision to ensure that no pupil gets left behind.
- Pupils’ exemplary behaviour is the result of a very clear focus, that pupils respect one another’s various abilities and differences. Pupils contribute to determining expectations of behaviour and openly express any concerns they may have. They know and appreciate that adults are totally committed to ensuring their safety.
- Senior leaders focus relentlessly on developing very high standards of classroom practice. All staff take on responsibilities and undertake professional development willingly, contributing highly effectively to improving the school’s performance. The outstanding and constantly evolving curriculum ensures pupils are highly motivated to learn. The governing body supports the school effectively, but is over-reliant on a core group of experienced and committed members. Several new members have not yet received training and other governors are not yet equipped to take on more senior roles as the need arises.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the governing body by the end of the current school year, so as to

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sustain and improve its ability to challenge school by:

- rapidly training new governors
- preparing members of the governing body to take on senior roles as and when they are required.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils currently in Year 2 are on course to maintain the outstanding outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics of earlier cohorts. In mathematics pupils rise impressively to the challenge of multiplying double-digit numbers they have generated themselves in games which fully capture their interest. They write both descriptive and imaginative texts with a sense of excitement in their learning, such as in describing the nature of different planets, with well sequenced and accurately punctuated sentences. All pupils read with a sure grasp of linking letters and sounds. They understand and express opinions about books they read. More-able pupils rework texts they have read to consolidate comprehension skills. Pupils' written work is neatly presented. Many already use fluent joined-up writing and tidily presented mathematical work supports ordered thinking.

The Year 1 cohort, which is not as strong, is now making very good progress because early assessment in the Reception classes has enabled the school to adapt the Year 1 curriculum to meet their needs in a highly effective way. Their attainment in reading is now above that of other pupils of their age.

Progress in the Reception classes is outstanding, with children gaining a sure grasp of basic addition and reading phonetically challenging words with considerable success. Children enter the school, with skills and experiences broadly in line with expectations. However, there has been marked variation from year to year: some cohorts come in above expectations. In all cohorts, children's social and emotional development is strong on entry. Staff in Reception classes skilfully build on this, so that children soon gain excellent dispositions to learning and make rapid progress in all areas of learning, including in their acquisition of early literacy and numeracy skills.

The early identification of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs enables effective support to be quickly assigned. These pupils make excellent progress from their various starting points. Pupils who speak English as an additional language settle very quickly and also make excellent progress.

All parents who returned questionnaires agreed and over two thirds strongly agreed that their children make good progress. Inspection findings found that most pupils make outstanding progress.

Quality of teaching

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Teachers consistently produce good or outstanding lessons in which pupils learn and progress at a very rapid rate. Lessons are imaginative, using a wealth of curricular resources and exciting strategies to engage pupils of all abilities in their learning. For example, lessons in the new cookery room not only give children practical skills which help them to understand nutrition and diet, but lead to interesting follow-up which consolidates and extends their literacy and numeracy skills. Lessons are pacy and dynamic and include an impressive range of teaching skills. Teachers assess the quality of pupils' learning in the classroom highly effectively and they adapt their questioning. They know individuals' preferred learning styles very well and plan lessons which both suit and challenge all pupils. Practical activity, such as 'brain gym' or acting out their learning, contributes strongly to pupils' high levels of concentration. Relationships in class are excellent, contributing to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils work very constructively in paired and group learning. In a Year 2 music lesson, pupils exhibited very careful listening skills in their class composition inspired by the planets and their constructive, critical comments reflected a particularly strong spiritual and artistic awareness. Teaching assistants are well trained and able to deliver highly effective individual and small group support, as well as providing accurate and informative assessment of pupils' development.

Rigorous and regular assessment enables teachers to track pupils' progress meticulously and to set targets which are both challenging and achievable. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of their targets and are ambitious to achieve them. Thorough marking, which consistently corrects errors in pupils' work and provides supportive comments about the next steps in their learning, helps pupils to reach their targets speedily.

All parents and carers who submitted questionnaires felt teaching was good and that the school helps them to support their children's learning effectively. The inspector found that teaching was outstanding overall.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class and around the school. In the Reception classes children listen to one another attentively, empathising with different emotions and developing respect and understanding for each individual. In one class, for example, children sensibly waited their turn to paint on the easels, watching and appreciating the work of their peers. 'That's great' exclaimed one boy amazed by a beautiful flower painted by the girl he stood behind. Pupils respond extremely well to the well-structured messages of the circle time, philosophy and assemblies which cultivate spiritual and moral values, such as tolerance, resilience or wisdom. This is apparent in their attitudes to learning and in the effectiveness of initiatives proposed by the school council. For example, they have helped develop the 'golden rules' of school behaviour, including keeping the canteen a quiet area for eating and limiting numbers using playground apparatus, in order for play to be safe and enjoyable for all.

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Since the previous inspection, no pupils have been excluded. Incidents are very carefully recorded and monitored for emerging patterns of behaviour, so that support, including the involvement of parents and carers, can be implemented before concerns escalate. Pupils understand that bullying involves more than the odd isolated incident. Occasionally, comments made by individuals can cause upset to others, but pupils know to tell an adult if anything becomes persistent. Almost all parents and carers who submitted questionnaires agreed that any bullying, on the very rare occasions it occurs, is dealt with promptly and effectively so that pupils are safe. All agreed and two thirds strongly agreed that behaviour is good.

Due to the unstinting efforts of staff to engage parents and carers, attendance has risen over the last two years and is now above average. Support for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is of high quality, enhanced by a confidential counselling service and close home-school liaison. There is almost no persistent absence. Punctuality to school and to lessons is very good and there is a calm, orderly feel to all activities in the school.

Leadership and management

The pursuit of excellence underpins all activities in the school. Staff have excellent opportunities for their professional development and disseminate their training to one another for the benefit of all children. All staff take on responsibility willingly. They use tracking data and observe one another teach to identify ways of improving provision. Teachers contribute to a detailed and commonly shared development plan. As a consequence, the school has an excellent understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

The outstanding and constantly evolving curriculum enthuses pupils in their learning and promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning extremely well. Core skills are developed systematically, with particularly impressive results in mathematics. In topic work, strong gains in scientific, artistic and cultural knowledge are enhanced by many opportunities to apply learning in literacy and numeracy. Pupils have many stimulating encounters with other cultures and languages. Adaptations to the Year 1 curriculum are proving highly successful at addressing the much wider range of learning needs which this year group possesses. Outdoor learning raises the self-esteem of less confident pupils. Visitors enhance the curriculum effectively and display, such as the art work undertaken with a professional artist, attests to the stimulating environment for pupils' learning. Close links to local churches and the 'inter-generational' club, which cultivates contacts to local people of all ages, ensure pupils' understanding of community organisations is good. Pupils talk excitedly of the very wide range of clubs on offer for such a small school and almost all participate in at least one, often many more.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and a strong ethos for promoting equality and tackling discrimination pervades the school's work. The governing body has a high level of expertise in social work and

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ensures the school is well placed to seek additional support when complex cases present themselves. Parents and carers engage enthusiastically with the school, such as in fund-raising events or working alongside their children to understand the new computerised learning platform. They hold the school in extremely high regard and agree almost unanimously that the school responds well to their concerns and keeps them well informed.

Despite some inexperience among some members of the governing body, the school has exceptional capacity for sustaining improvement. The school promptly addressed the points for development from the previous inspection and each year pupils' attainment has risen ever higher. The core group of governors bring skill and expertise to the governing body, but new governors have not yet undertaken governor training and procedures to ensure continuity in key roles are not established.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



9 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heather Avenue Infant School, Norwich, NR6 6LT

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when I recently visited your school. I very much enjoyed talking with you, listening to you read and seeing you learning in lessons. Your opinions were very helpful to the inspection. Please also thank your parents and carers for completing their questionnaires. I agreed with Mrs Bream-Hardy, her staff and your parents and carers that Heather Avenue is an outstanding school. Well done to pupils and teachers alike! Here are some of the things that I think you do very well.

- You make outstanding progress in your learning because teachers prepare exciting lessons and make sure that you understand how to improve your work at every opportunity.
- Pupils in Year 2 do better in reading, writing and mathematics than in most infant schools in the country.
- You play extremely well with one another and show a lot of respect for others, including your teachers.
- You enjoy getting involved in the clubs and all the other interesting activities the school provides to widen your horizons.
- You enjoy the challenge of trying to meet your targets and improving your learning.

The school is very well led by Mrs Bream-Hardy and her team. They make every effort to ensure that you are safe in school and that pupils who need help with their learning or experience difficult circumstances are given every support to succeed. The governors, who hold the school to account, have had many changes recently. Because of this, I am asking them to make sure that they train up the new governors well and make sure that there is always someone ready to take on important roles when changes happen in the future. This does not affect you directly very much, but it is important for the school.

I hope very much that you will continue to support your teachers to improve the school further by concentrating hard in class and meeting your targets even quicker.

Yours sincerely

John Mason
Lead inspector

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