

Hawthorn Tree School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120424
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339691
Inspection dates	21–22 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Gaunt
Headteacher	Mr M Lister
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons, and held meetings with pupils, staff, members of the governing body and the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at data about the school's performance, the improvement plan and key policies. Inspection questionnaires were received from pupils and from 51 parents.

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

- Why pupils make less progress in mathematics at Key Stage 1 than in reading and writing and the extent to which it relates to prior learning and the organisation of the curriculum
- Why standards show some inconsistency year on year, including at higher levels and the impact that assessment practices and teaching have on pupils' attainment, including writing, which is a priority for the school
- How widespread, coordinated and effective the school's efforts are to promote pupils' economic well-being through links with partnerships, including local businesses
- How effective subject leaders are in setting a clear direction and promoting high standards and how effective senior management is in raising the quality of teaching and learning
- What attainment on entry, provision and outcomes tell us about children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

This large, over-subscribed school is located to the east of the town. Almost all pupils are White British although there has been a small increase of those from Eastern European backgrounds over recent years who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is generally below average, although in some year groups it is slightly above. The percentage with a statement is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. Many pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.

The school was awarded the Sportsmark in 2008. In 2009 it achieved the Financial Management in Schools Award and was revalidated with Investors in People status. It is part of the Boston Excellence Cluster, The Technology Colleges Trust, The High School Federation Specialist School, the Kirton Middlecott Sports Partnership and Boston Networked Learning Community.

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

This is a satisfactory and improving school with particular strengths. Inspectors were struck by the ethos of care and encouragement in a school which has a real family atmosphere. The school provides a happy and busy environment in which pupils have a wide variety of opportunities to learn and grow into responsible young people. The good curriculum, for example, which offers a broad range of activities, is enhanced by the school's numerous partnerships and developing business links. They extend well some aspects of provision, opportunities for personal development and pupils' cultural development. Good care, guidance and support, underpinned by effective policies and procedures, create a secure learning environment for pupils.

Standards, which have fallen since the last inspection, particularly in writing, are being addressed soundly. Children make satisfactory gains overall in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, leading to many achieving the expected outcomes for their age. Progress through the school is sound. Pupils have reached standards that are broadly average in recent years, although these are variable between subjects. The school's focus on basic mathematical skills is beginning to have an impact on standards at Key Stage 1. The priority given to raising writing standards, both in literacy lessons and increasingly across subjects, is being strengthened through teachers' consistent focus on specific skills such as descriptive writing. The school's accurate information about the levels at which pupils work, do not consistently convert into good challenge in lessons. It means that progress is not as quick as it could be through the school to raise standards, including for those pupils capable of reaching higher levels. However, in a very effective English lesson, high expectations and challenging and very specific questioning about the learning goals extended pupils' understanding significantly. Mixed-year classes are not a barrier in raising standards and increasingly well matched activities in a number of lessons confirm this. However, instability of staffing over recent years has resulted in some gaps in pupils' learning and slowed progress. Targets are used in lessons, although they are not consistently integral to pupils' learning.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher's dedication, together with their clear focus and rigorous monitoring are beginning to work through into improved standards and quickening progress. Subject leaders are now securely in place, well motivated and able to lead improvements in their areas. Their role in embedding good practice to raise standards is developing. Built on increasingly firm foundations, the school has a sound capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Accelerate progress and raise standards across the school in writing and science, and in mathematics at Key Stage 1 by
 - embedding consistently good practice in teaching and learning, including accurate challenge for pupils
 - monitoring regularly and rigorously the quality of teaching and learning, including any gaps in learning, and addressing any issues effectively
 - maintaining a focus on improving specific writing, mathematical and scientific skills to ensure progression of learning
 - building up pupils' involvement in their targets so that they are integral to their learning.
- Focus middle leaders on raising attainment across the school in their subjects by monitoring provision and pupils' progress in order to drive improvement.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Standards by the end of Year 6 show some variability from year to year. Overall, they have been broadly in line with the national average in the previous five years and demonstrate pupils' sound achievement. The exception is standards in writing which are below average. Through a focus on specific skills and a greater attention to how pupils learn, particularly boys, there are clear signs of improvement in pupils' writing, as seen in lessons but their impact on standards is yet to come through. Lesson observations also demonstrate that the school is focusing with growing impact on pupils' basic mathematical skills from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards in order to accelerate progress. Standards are pulled down in all subjects by the lower than average percentage of pupils who reach higher levels. The differing composition of cohorts is a factor as is some pupils' difficulty in interpreting the questions. It is another reason why literacy skills are increasingly being reinforced across the curriculum. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, also achieve satisfactorily, aided by appropriate support.

Pupils say that they enjoy school and learning. Their good behaviour and attendance support this. Pupils understand the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily and a high proportion participate in sports activities outside school hours. They know how to stay safe because the school regularly reinforces awareness of potential risks in learning and playing activities. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that they behave well and respectfully towards each other, valuing others for who they are. They also feel valued by the staff, giving them the confidence to participate in the good range of opportunities and at the same time strengthen inter-personal skills for adulthood. The school council, for example, passes on the pupils' suggestions, with an earlier achievement being the school's sports kits. Its work has now extended into the community, through its partnership work. Numerous other

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chances for pupils to work in teams and to be leaders encourage pupils' sound preparation for secondary school which includes their average standards in English and mathematics.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching varies between satisfactory and good, with some that is outstanding, reflecting the inconsistency in practice. Overall it is satisfactory because it impacts soundly on progress but, for example, in literacy in Year 6, consistently strong teaching leads to accelerating progress. In effective lessons, pupils make good progress because tasks are chosen carefully to provide accurate challenge for them, often involving problem solving. Good assessment systems facilitate this. However, in other lessons, tasks are less carefully planned and sometimes the work given to pupils is too similar to enable them to make the progress that they are capable of. Pupils are generally keen to learn, especially when they are actively involved in their learning. The purpose of learning is made clear and in the best lessons, intended outcomes of learning are regularly revisited. Pupils enjoy lessons including the use of interactive whiteboards which are

¹ 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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used well, often in starter activities. They can become restless when learning is not interesting or when they have to listen for too long. A good feature is regular group work although sometimes pupils need more guidance from staff to make quicker progress. Some excellent marking was seen during the inspection which gave very specific pointers for improvement but is not as focused in all lessons. Targets are in place and promoted in lessons to a varying degree. Self and peer assessment is a developing aspect of learning.

The good curriculum is planned carefully to promote pupils' enjoyment of learning and their personal development. Built round literacy and numeracy, planning of lessons is increasingly helping pupils to transfer their English and mathematical skills into other subjects, including writing. At Key Stage 1, a two year rolling programme in the mixed-age classes helps to ensure coverage of the curriculum for all pupils. Critical thinking skills are in place and are adding another dimension to learning. The school has good provision for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English and also for those who find some aspects of learning difficult. The school's partnerships extend pupils' opportunities, including broadening the range of popular after school clubs and enhancement activities. Provision for pupils identified as gifted and talented is built into the school's programme and into its partnership work with other schools. Children enjoy learning French and Spanish, which are also two of several ways that the school weaves cultural development into learning.

The school takes very seriously its responsibility to keep all pupils safe and this is reflected in their sense of security. Pastoral care and support are good. The school knows the individual needs of pupils well and pupils and parents appreciate the help from the school and outside agencies in promoting well-being and learning. During the inspection, a teaching assistant's good guidance and support of a group of lower achieving pupils accelerated their progress. The sensitive approach towards vulnerable pupils ensures that they can settle to learning. Pupils' transition to secondary school is facilitated by careful, coordinated arrangements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The very focused headteacher has a clear understanding of how the school needs to develop, based on accurate monitoring and evaluation of, for example, the quality of teaching and learning. He is supported effectively by the deputy headteacher who is a

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key player in the improvements that are coming through. Together they are embedding their ambition for the school into its work. All of the staff work effectively to provide a caring, safe and nurturing environment. Pupils are valued for who they are and the school is promoting equality and tackling discrimination soundly through its daily practices. Performance management targets for staff, which reflect the main priorities, assist the school in its efforts to achieve sustainable improvements. Middle leadership, an issue at the last inspection, has been slower to make an impact on provision and standards because of changes in staffing. Nevertheless, the specific foci which the middle leaders are prioritising, such as writing, are starting to promote improvement in all years. The school demonstrates good practice in its partnerships with other educational and sporting establishments. Its community cohesion programme is broadening links with the wider community, all of which provide additional opportunities for pupils to extend their academic development and personal well-being. The school's respect for parents and their views and its commitment to help them to support their child's learning, strengthen already positive links between home and school.

The governing body, which is very committed and knowledgeable, understands the importance of its role. Safeguarding procedures and practices, including child protection and risk assessments, are good and are reviewed regularly and effectively by the governors. However, the governing body is not yet evaluating the school's work on a regular and full basis. The school represents satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Overall children make sound progress from their starting points. Girls' progress is good while boys' is satisfactory. The majority of children start school with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with national expectations. However, they are well below average in writing and below average in calculation. Children settle in quickly to the bright, busy and caring environment. They like the established routines, and good modelling of behaviour by staff reminds them to treat other children kindly and to behave well. They respond very positively to the improving range of activities. The staff's knowledge that boys' progress is generally slower than that of girls' is resulting in more careful planning for their learning. This includes the large outdoor area which offers imaginative provision throughout the year and extends independent and group learning activities. The daily reminders and teaching about keeping safe and healthy promote children's personal development well. They generally play cooperatively and are supported by good arrangements to safeguard children's well-being. Staff have an accurate understanding of each child's needs and circumstances through constructive relationships with parents. They are a strength of the school and are established in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Together with quickly improving provision, detailed recording of children's learning and more formal communication with Key Stage 1, it confirms the emerging good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of the stage, a large majority of children achieve the early learning goals in most aspects of learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

About a fifth of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Almost all parents are happy with the quality of education provided by the school. They are particularly impressed by the approachability of staff in what one parent describes as, 'A very family orientated and friendly school.' A parent of a child in the Early Years Foundation Stage wrote of her daughter being, 'So eager to get to school - she is learning more than you would ever imagine.' A very small minority expressed concerns about behaviour, the extent to which the school takes account of their views, safety, information about their child's progress and how to support their child's learning. The inspectors found no evidence to support them. However, while maintaining confidentiality, the comments have been passed on to the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hawthorn Tree 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 51 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 263 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	63	17	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	70	14	27	0	0	2	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	45	21	41	0	0	3	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	55	16	32	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	25	50	24	48	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	48	21	41	0	0	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	38	28	57	0	0	1	2
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)	22	43	26	52	0	0	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	54	20	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	43	22	43	1	2	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	46	23	45	1	2	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	24	48	25	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	48	24	48	0	0	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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



23 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hawthorn Tree School, Boston, PE21 0PT

I am writing to tell you the judgements that we made about your school when we visited you a few weeks ago. First, on behalf of the inspectors, I thank you for making us feel so welcome. We enjoyed the two days that we spent with you very much, especially watching you learning, playing and hearing from you about your school. You are fortunate to be able to work with other schools and organisations which provide you with extra opportunities to learn new skills and to learn with other people. You like lessons, including learning through teachers using interactive white boards. We liked the way that more and more of you are using the skills that you learn in other lessons. We saw this happen in numeracy when you were speaking some words in French.

You enjoy school, feel safe there and behave well. You like the staff, who care for you well and help you to learn. Your school is led with great commitment by your headteacher and deputy headteacher and they and the staff are always looking for ways to make the school better. You make satisfactory progress through the school and the standards that you reach by the end of Year 6 are average for your age. We want standards to rise across the school, especially in writing and science, and in mathematics for pupils in Key Stage 1. Your headteacher and the staff are going to help this to happen by making sure that teaching is always at least good and by checking that you do not have any gaps in your learning. The school has already started working on improving your writing skills and will help you to develop the wide range of skills that you need in order to write as well as you can. We want you to use your targets more in lessons so that you focus on what you need to do to move further forward in your work. The staff who lead subjects are going to help standards to rise by checking very regularly the progress that you are making.

We look forward to these improvements being made so that your school will be even better.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector

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