

# High Beeches Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	117342
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379398
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Tusha Chakraborti

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carol Senior
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Driver
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 October 2006
<b>School address</b>	Aldwickbury Crescent Harpenden AL5 5SD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 767966
<b>Fax number</b>	01582 620310
<b>Email address</b>	admin@highbeeches.herts.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	22–23 February 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	379398



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti

Additional inspector

Aileen Thomas

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 11 lessons taught by eight teachers. They heard children reading, scrutinised pupils' work, visited assemblies and undertook other activities in order to observe pupils' learning. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school evaluation documents, safeguarding documentation, data on pupils' progress and development planning. Responses from questionnaires completed by 171 parents and carers were analysed, as well as those from 89 pupils and 17 staff.

## Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than the average primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. Children enter the school from a range of nursery providers and are taught in a Reception class. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. It holds Healthy School status and the Activemark 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. It provides a safe, supportive and harmonious environment where pupils grow up as independent and confident learners. Its excellent partnership with parents and carers ensures they are involved fully in their children's learning. Despite some outstanding features, the school is not yet outstanding overall because there is not yet enough outstanding teaching to ensure that all groups of pupils make outstanding progress.
- All groups of pupils achieve well, and attainment is consistently significantly above average by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They display great enthusiasm for learning and enjoy facing a challenge. This creates a very positive learning environment which contributes considerably to their achievement, and is supported by the school's highly inclusive ethos. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. Attendance is high.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work, and motivate them to learn through well-planned activities. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and, as a result, do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Strong leadership and management ensure that self-evaluation is accurate. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are good. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and clear priorities for school development provide a very clear direction for what needs to be improved further to raise performance. The governing body is well organised, and makes effective use of the information gained from its members' visits and that provided by the headteacher to hold the school to account for pupils' achievement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - using assessment data more effectively to set challenging tasks for the most able pupils in all lessons, so that they achieve as well as they can.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire or who spoke to inspectors are rightly very pleased with their children's achievement. Their views are clearly reflected in their comments, such as, 'I am extremely pleased with the school; it continually strives for excellence,' and, 'The school has a lovely atmosphere and my children have always been very happy there.'

Children make a good start in the Reception, having joined with skills and aptitudes that are in line with those expected for their age. An attractive learning environment, a good range of resources and a careful monitoring of children's progress help them to make rapid progress and to achieve above average standards in all areas of learning by the time they move to Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress across the school and their attainment is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 2 and Year 6. They develop a love of books and read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction. Most are fluent readers and are confident in reviewing the events and characters from the books they read. The school has placed a strong focus on raising attainment in writing to a similar level to reading over the past year, and current assessment data indicate accelerated progress in writing. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make consistently good progress as a result of the well-targeted support they receive from all staff. Consequently, most of these pupils reach standards that are similar to their peers.

Pupils enjoy 'talk partner' activities and group work where they enthusiastically discuss their ideas before embarking on a continuous piece of writing. Most show a clear understanding of different genres and write for different purposes, building successfully on the knowledge they gain from other subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils, having developed a good understanding of physical characteristics of rivers through their topic work, wrote poems on 'Rivers' using a range of vocabulary imaginatively. Pupils use their computer skills effectively for supporting their learning in all subjects.

### Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers rightly feel that teaching is good and report that the school has a 'great team of highly dedicated and skilled teachers' who work very well

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together to create a very positive learning environment for all pupils. The pupils also feel that teaching is good. Teachers display good subject knowledge. They engage pupils well in their learning through effective questioning and successfully build on their prior learning. Teachers plan well, usually matching work to the learning needs of all groups of pupils. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to extend the skills and understanding of the most able pupils through sufficiently challenging tasks.

Planning for topic work ensures a good range of activities across all subject areas and this enables pupils to make consistently good progress in developing reading, writing, mathematics and communication skills across the curriculum. This is evident from the topic work on dinosaurs in Year 2, where pupils learn to differentiate between fiction and non-fiction books about dinosaurs and engage successfully in writing instructions for making 'dinosaur cookies' that they made in a previous lesson. Teachers make excellent use of technology and use the interactive whiteboards very effectively to share the purpose of lessons and to explain the success criteria. This ensures that pupils know what they are expected to learn and are able to evaluate their learning. Teachers promote pupils' moral and social skills very well through group discussions and 'talk partner' activities. Pupils are given opportunities to read stories from different cultures and they learn to value different cultural traditions. Reading is taught well throughout the school, resulting in confident readers of all ages. Teaching assistants provide effective support for all groups of pupils, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

In the Reception class, staff are particularly successful in creating a welcoming environment where children become confident in pursuing activities that match their own interests as well as those directed by adults. Regular teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) supports children well in rapidly developing their literacy skills. Children develop good communication and language skills through whole-class and group discussions and are confident in explaining what they do.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Central to the school's work is the way it promotes pupils' safety, personal development and academic achievement through its caring ethos. Procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour are comprehensive and applied consistently. As a result, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are courteous, cooperative and show a high level of engagement in their learning. The vast majority of parents and carers say that a good standard of behaviour is the norm, and their children feel safe at school at all times. Pupils report that bullying of any kind is extremely rare and add that when it does happen the school responds very quickly and successfully, ensuring that they feel totally safe and secure. Pupils develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the risks they face in their everyday lives; for example, they are well aware of cyber-bullying and know what to do if they should encounter it. Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their consideration and support for others. They have a very clear understanding of what

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is right or wrong which has a very positive impact on their behaviour. As a result, they enjoy coming to school and their attendance is consistently high. The rate of exclusion is exceptionally low. Pupils take on roles of responsibility within the class, through their school council work and when arranging fundraising activities to support national and international charities, such as for building a school in Uganda. Older pupils enjoy supporting the children from the Reception class and acting as 'buddies' to younger ones in the playground. Children in the reception class demonstrate exceptionally positive behaviour and support each other very effectively. This was seen in a session where a child briefed another child, who had been away, about the story they read in the previous lesson.

### **Leadership and management**

The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement, as is illustrated by the sustained high standards of attainment that pupils achieve. The senior leaders have a clear and ambitious vision which drives the school forward and this is reflected in the recent strategies that have been introduced. They now have a systematic and rigorous programme for the monitoring of teaching and staff development by which they can develop the expertise of teachers and consistently raise pupils' achievement. Consequently, staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and work effectively as a team. Assessment procedures have been strengthened to track pupils' progress more effectively and to promote a more rigorous self- and peer-assessment system. This is being implemented successfully. Analytical and accurate self-evaluation successfully informs the school's priorities for improvement planning. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's performance and provides good support and challenge.

The effective curriculum has a strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. It has recently been reviewed to provide more cross-curricular links between literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement, especially in writing. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues are also promoted well through the curriculum. Assemblies and religious studies support pupils in reflecting on the connections between spirituality and action in their own lives. For example, in an assembly on Ash Wednesday, pupils were encouraged to reflect on core values of different religions to gain deeper understanding of religious and cultural diversity. A good range of art and sporting activities, as well as trips to museums and local places of interest, enrich pupils' learning experience considerably.

The school is highly committed to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination through raising and sustaining improvement in the performance of different groups of pupils. Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and are monitored regularly. Risk assessments are very well developed and careful checks are made of the suitability of adults to work with children. The school has established excellent partnerships with parents and carers, engaging them successfully in all aspects of its work.

## 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](http://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.**



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of High Beeches Primary School, Harpenden, AL5 5SD**

Thank you all very much for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school. This is clearly reflected in your excellent attendance and punctuality. We agree with you that your teachers take very good care of you. We think your behaviour is excellent and are pleased to see how considerate you are to each other in lessons and around the school. You develop an outstanding understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. You carry out your duties, including your jobs as 'buddies' and school council representatives, very responsibly. Thank you also for the questionnaires that you filled in for the inspection and for sharing your views with us.

Your school is providing you with a good education and, as a result, you grow up as confident learners. You progress at a good rate in your learning and reach standards that are significantly above average in English and mathematics by the time you leave Year 6. To improve your school further, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- make sure that the work provided for you is just a bit harder to move your learning forward as rapidly as possible, especially for those of you who can learn quickly.

You already make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. You can help the school to improve even further by continuing to work hard, so that your school remains a happy place.

Yours sincerely

Tusha Chakraborti  
Lead inspector

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