

Highworth Combined School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110403
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356733
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	449
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Ferguson
Headteacher	Graeme Kilner
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 lessons and observed 18 teachers. They also held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, minutes of governing body meetings, planning documents, pupils' work and questionnaires returned from pupils, staff and 146 parents and carers.

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

- The school's success in accelerating progress and raising attainment in English and mathematics.
- Whether the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good enough to ensure that all pupils are challenged and make good progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in raising achievement and sustaining improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school. Just over two fifths of the pupils are of Asian British heritage and a further two fifths are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils are from a variety of minority ethnic groups. Just over two fifths of the pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. One fifth of the pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs mainly relate to hearing impairment, speech, language and communication difficulties, and to emotional and social difficulties. The school has a department for hearing impaired pupils, which currently supports nine pupils. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into a Nursery and two Reception classes.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Parents appreciate the good care and guidance their children receive and have overwhelmingly positive views about the school. It is a diverse, but cohesive, community which provides a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding because pupils feel very safe, secure and ready to learn. Under the good leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection. United in their determination to raise standards and expectations, senior leaders have identified what needs to be done and put in place measures that have halted the dip in the results for mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2009 and increased the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics. This concerted action to raise standards, based on the school's clear and accurate review of its performance, demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain improvement.

Although the quality of teaching varies, it is good overall and there are many examples of excellent practice. Consequently, all pupils regardless of their gender, ability or ethnicity make good progress from starting points that are below those expected to reach broadly average levels in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Progress accelerates at the end of Key Stage 2 where teaching is consistently at least good. In these lessons, teachers set their pupils challenging targets. They know their pupils well and skilfully scaffold pupils' learning so that pupils build securely on what they already know and understand. However, this good practice is not currently shared as widely as it could be and there are a few classes where the teachers' expectations are not so high. Where this happens, pupils are unsure about the levels they are reaching and those they are expected to achieve. Guidance on what must be done to improve is not clear and time is not set aside for pupils to rectify any mistakes and consolidate their learning before moving on. This slows the rate of progress. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning effectively. However, this lack of consistency in the quality of teaching across the school demonstrates that there is scope for greater rigour in monitoring procedures to ensure that all pupils make the best progress they can, all of the time.

Pupils say that they enjoy school. They adopt healthy lifestyles and the majority come to school regularly. Good care, guidance and support enable pupils in the hearing impaired department to integrate seamlessly into mainstream. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly and make good progress because staff foster positive attitudes to learning. The quality of provision has been successfully improved since the previous inspection and is good with a wide variety of exciting opportunities for child-initiated activities in and out of doors.

The governing body makes sure that the members are well informed and they challenge and support where and when necessary. Procedures for safeguarding are good and ensure

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that all pupils feel safe and that their emotional and social needs are met. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are thorough and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. The school's strong contribution to promoting community cohesion has ensured that pupils learn from each other within the rich diversity of the school population and through the school's link with a very different school in another locality.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2011, accelerate the rate of pupil progress in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what their pupils will achieve
 - all pupils receive clear guidance on the level they are expected to achieve, the levels they are currently reaching and are given guidance and time to improve their work
 - senior leaders rigorously monitor the expectations for learning in lessons, the rate of progress and the use of assessment, providing feedback and points for action.
- By July 2011, ensure that teaching is consistently good through sharing good practice more effectively.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Although progress through the school is uneven, the majority of pupils make good progress. They are keen and enthusiastic learners. They value the good support they receive and enjoy their lessons. For example, Year 5 pupils, who were finding and interpreting the mode and range of a set of data, made good progress because the teacher had used her detailed knowledge of pupils' abilities to structure their learning accurately. The pace of learning was fast because the teacher made sure that pupils took small, secure steps in learning and then gave them helpful strategies so that they could work independently. All of the pupils who were learning to speak English as an additional language, including the Asian British heritage pupils, knew and understood what they had to do because new vocabulary was clarified before the learning moved on. Pupils with special educational needs said that they knew that they were making good progress because their test marks were improving.

High quality support, including the use of sign language, ensures that all pupils with special educational needs, including those in the hearing impaired department, make good progress to reach levels that are at least in line with, and at times above, average levels at the end of Year 6.

The positive ethos that results from the good care that pupils receive enables them to develop good personal qualities. They work and play harmoniously, come to school regularly and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils report that there is no bullying and know that there will always be someone who will listen to them. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe and have a thorough understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy a healthy choice at lunchtime and fruit at break time. The school council is proud of the work it has done to make the school more environmentally friendly.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy lessons where teaching is focused and purposeful and they can play an active role in their learning. For example, all of the Year 4 pupils, who were busily employed measuring water and calibrating containers, were clear about their learning and totally oblivious to the fact that they were dressed as different characters for 'Book Day' because they were concentrating so hard and determined to do well. The work was well organised and planned at exactly the right level for each group. The teacher's good use of questioning and analysis of pupils' answers clarified the importance of measurement to check whether their estimates were accurate. However, there are times when work is not so precisely matched to pupils' learning needs, pupils are unsure of the level they are working at and expectations are not as high as they could be. There are also some occasions when insufficient time or guidance is given to help pupils improve their work and consolidate their learning and when this happens their rate of progress slows.

Improvements to the curriculum through, for example, the introduction of more investigative work in mathematics and science have made learning interesting. Senior leaders have monitored the curriculum to check that pupils have the right skills for progression and, as a result, it supports pupils' learning well. The good level of care, guidance and support enjoyed by all pupils and their families ensures that every pupil participates fully in all aspects of school life. External support is sought quickly when

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needed to improve the learning and well-being of the pupils and help families when they have to face difficulties. The good, and at times excellent, support that pupils with hearing impairment receive is reflected in the good progress that they make.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 headteacher's clear vision and commitment to improvement is shared by the school community. Leadership and management are distributed across all levels of the school and this has proved to be a powerful tool for improvement. Senior leaders recognise that there is further scope for the good and excellent practice that is to be found within the school to be shared to ensure a greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. All teachers are held to account through pupil progress meetings, where the school's accurate tracking system highlights any underperformance. This, together with the school's good care and guidance for all pupils, ensures that the school's provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination is good. The school's performance is monitored and evaluated systematically and used carefully to make effective plans for improvement.

Members of the governing body have a good knowledge and understanding of the school because they monitor aspects of the school's work and take an active part in monthly management meetings. Senior leaders and members of the governing body take great care to ensure that procedures for child protection and the safeguarding of pupils, including training, are effective and regularly updated. Community cohesion is promoted successfully within the school and local community. The school has established effective links with other schools within the United Kingdom. Wider, global links are less well developed.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly into the routines of school life because they are well cared for, safe and secure. Their days are filled with exciting activities and this means that they make good progress in building skills and knowledge in all six areas of learning. Although they achieve well in all areas of learning from starting points which are below those expected, few reach the levels expected for their age by the end of the Reception Year.

The classrooms and outside areas are well resourced and provide stimulating opportunities for children to explore and investigate. They enjoy the welcoming, secure environment and immerse themselves happily in the exciting, well-planned activities both in and out of doors. Reception children relish the challenge to investigate their mathematical skills. For example, a group of children chose to fit interlocking number mats together to form a hopscotch grid and then spent a sustained amount of time happily jumping from number to number in the correct sequence. Adults use questioning skills well. For example, a group of children made major improvements to the big boat that they were building by considering all of the options open to them. Adults encourage children to answer in sentences providing good models for the language required. Children who are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language benefit from the good bi-lingual support that is available. Teaching assistants provide focused support for children with special educational needs. Partnerships with parents are good, children are well cared for, and all safeguarding procedures are securely in place. The good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has effectively ensured that what the children do in school is related to their individual needs. Consequently, the children benefit from good provision for their welfare, learning and development.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all aspects of school life. A very small minority indicated that they thought that the school did not take account of their suggestions and concerns. However, evidence from the inspection shows that the school works hard to address parental suggestions and concerns. The vast majority of parents commented that staff are very approachable. One parent, voicing the views of many, said, 'They do everything they possibly can to support and teach my child.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highworth Combined School and Nursery 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 146 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 449 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	72	49	70	48	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	86	59	58	40	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	28	96	66	5	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	26	96	66	7	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	51	35	92	63	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	30	90	62	7	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	31	97	66	0	0	0	0
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)	36	25	89	61	6	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	26	91	62	7	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	25	90	62	6	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	25	80	55	12	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	48	33	88	60	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	42	83	57	2	1	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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



9 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highworth Combined School and Nursery, High Wycombe HP13 7PH

Thank you for being so friendly when we came to your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you. You really helped us with our work. Your school gives you a good standard of education and there are a lot of things your school does well.

You told us that you enjoy school and that you feel very safe. We found that everybody in school looks after you very well, especially those of you who have difficulties from time to time. We were impressed with your understanding and knowledge of how to keep fit and your healthy lifestyles. We could see that you behave very well, get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly.

Your headteacher and other staff know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better. We have asked the school to do two things.

- It should help you to do even better in English and in mathematics by making sure that when teachers mark your books they give you clear help on how you can improve. It should make sure that teachers give you the right level of work to help you to do the very best you can. It should also make sure that teachers help each other so that you can all make good progress.
- It should ensure that teachers share what they do well so that you always do the very best you can.

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and try your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson

Lead inspector

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