

Hamilton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110520
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	367385
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	667
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Raleigh
Headteacher	Graeme Aldous
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They observed 22 lessons taught by 22 teachers, in addition to brief observations as part of a 'learning walk'. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form, monitoring records, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 74 parents and carers were received and analysed, along with those from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's actions to raise attainment and accelerate progress, especially in mathematics, with a particular focus on the achievement of Pakistani pupils.
- The impact of strategies to narrow the gaps in attainment and achievement between different ability groups and girls and boys.
- The impact of leadership, management and governance on improving teaching, learning and progress, especially in mathematics.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.

Information about the school

Hamilton is a very large primary school. The accommodation is split over two sites which are approximately half a mile apart. Nursery, Reception and Years 3 and 4 are based at the Priory Road site. Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 are based at the Hampden Road site. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Just under a third of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than usually seen, as is the percentage who speak English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest group, just under 40% of the pupils, is of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, while the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than in most schools. There have been significant staffing changes since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher and two deputy headteachers in 2009. The school has gained Healthy Schools recognition and an Activemark award, and has recently been re-accredited with Investors in People status. The governing body manages a breakfast club at the Hampden Road site which is open to all pupils.

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

2

Main findings

Hamilton is a strongly improving school which provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Its knowledgeable and determined leadership team and proactive governing body have high aspirations for the school and are taking decisive action to reverse the downward trend in the school's performance in the national tests. Attainment has fallen year-on-year from the high standards achieved in 2006 to broadly average levels in 2010. Effective strategies to accelerate pupils' progress are already having a positive effect and the most recent assessments show a marked increase in the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding expected levels in Year 6. Overall, pupils make steady progress and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils generally do less well in mathematics than English, especially those in the middle-ability band, because work is not always planned carefully enough to build on previous learning.

The school has a number of significant strengths. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress due to imaginatively planned provision and a keen focus on developing basic skills. The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are exemplary. An excellent range of after-school activities and enrichments to the satisfactory curriculum provide pupils with many additional opportunities which enhance their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The high uptake of physical activities, walking to school initiatives and delicious, healthy school lunches are key factors in pupils' outstanding enthusiasm for keeping fit and healthy. The school is exceptionally good at promoting community cohesion. As one parent, typical of others, commented, 'Diversity is celebrated here which fosters an inclusive atmosphere at the school, felt by children in particular.' Pupils are well cared for and strong partnerships with a wide range of agencies enhance the good support they receive. Leaders have introduced a number of initiatives to reduce absences. These are beginning to have an impact but too many families still take their children out of school for extended holidays, which interrupts learning.

In general, parents' and carers' written comments mirror the findings of the inspection. Some say their children are taught well and make good progress, while others refer to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching between classes and year groups. This is the main reason why the school is currently judged to be satisfactory. The leadership team has introduced very robust systems for checking the quality of learning and helping teachers to improve their practice. Leaders are well aware that the good teaching often seen is not yet fully embedded and consistent across the school. Their efforts to increase this consistency have been hampered to a degree by staffing issues, including long-term absences, in some year groups. Nevertheless, they have identified accurately where improvement is needed and have introduced effective systems and procedures that are having an increasingly positive impact on accelerating progress, particularly that made by Pakistani pupils in mathematics. This, and the continuing high-quality provision for pupils'

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personal development, demonstrates the school's good capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in mathematics, particularly for average-attaining pupils, by:
 - ensuring that teachers do not spend too long explaining concepts and introducing tasks to the whole class
 - giving pupils more time to practise and apply knowledge and skills independently
 - planning tasks more carefully for different groups and individual pupils so that they build effectively on previously acquired concepts and skills.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better to at least 80% by December 2011 by:
 - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan suitably challenging tasks for all groups of pupils
 - developing the skills of learning support assistants and ensuring they support pupils' learning in every part of the lesson
 - improving the quality of marking so that it clearly shows pupils the next steps, and providing time for pupils to respond
 - developing the role of middle leaders in modelling good practice and driving improvement in their subjects.
- Improve attendance by:
 - working closely with the families of pupils whose attendance is below average, particularly Pakistani families, to help them understand the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of prolonged absence on pupils' learning and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress, often from starting points that are below those expected for their age. In Years 1 to 6, variations in progress arise from differences in the quality of teaching. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school and eagerness to learn is evident in every lesson. Even when the teaching has shortcomings, pupils work hard and try to do their best. In the lessons observed, pupils made good progress when they spent more time working on independent tasks and less time listening to the teacher. Learning was better when pupils were engaged in practical, hands-on activities, for example when Year 2 pupils sorted numbers into hoops to create a Venn diagram about multiples of 3 and 4. In just under half of the lessons observed, learning and progress were satisfactory. This was often because pupils spent too long listening to the teacher and, in some cases, 'switched off' because the whole-class input was not pitched at the right level for them.

The attainment gap between Pakistani pupils and others in mathematics has narrowed considerably as a result of concerted action by the school. This goes hand in hand with a marked reduction in unauthorised absences amongst Pakistani pupils over the past year.

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Girls and boys make similar progress. Some pupils with a statement of special educational needs make good progress as a result of high- quality support and effective engagement with external agencies. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers overall.

The excellent relationships between teachers and pupils are a key factor in the good behaviour seen in every class, around the school and at playtimes. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They enjoy taking responsibility and participate in a wide variety of activities in the local community, including the Mayor Making Ceremony and Hamilton Show. They collect toys and equipment for children in Zambia and raise funds for a number of charities. Pupils benefit from experiences such as a 'mini-enterprise' event and organising and financing their own yearly trip. Their average attendance rates and satisfactory basic skills prepare them adequately for the future.

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	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	3
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?

High-quality care for pupils' health, safety and well-being helps them to grow in confidence and creates a positive atmosphere for learning. The quality of other aspects of provision is less consistent. Variations in the quality of teaching between classes in each year group stem mainly from inconsistencies in the way teachers use assessment information to devise activities that build on previous learning and motivate all pupils to make as much progress as possible. Where teaching was less effective, teachers talked to

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the whole class for too long, slowing the pace of learning. In the stronger lessons, pupils learned at a brisk pace and work was matched well to their different abilities. In some lessons, teaching assistants support learning well. In others, they are not used productively during lesson introductions. In general, teaching is stronger in English than in mathematics, where the school has rightly identified training needs. The marking of pupils' work is not consistently effective in showing pupils how to improve and they are not always given time to follow up teachers' comments.

The curriculum has some significant strengths, not least in sport, dance and music, where the school's good partnerships with outside organisations greatly enhance provision. Many pupils develop good skills through the expertise of a specialist music teacher and individual tuition on a wide range of instruments. Learning is enhanced by a variety of visits, visitors and events such as the Globetrotters week, where pupils learned about each other's cultures. The beginnings of a more creative approach to curriculum design are evident but not fully embedded. A heavier emphasis on developing reading skills is paying dividends. In mathematics, on the other hand, the curriculum is not fully effective in promoting good progress in learning for all groups of pupils. For example, pupils have too few opportunities to use and apply knowledge and skills in a range of real-life situations.

The breakfast club provides pupils with a healthy start to the day and is greatly appreciated by parents and carers. Effective liaison between teachers and close links with secondary schools ease pupils' transition from one year to the next. Good support for pupils at the early stages of learning English enables them to make similar progress over time to their peers. Termly assessments are analysed to identify pupils who are underachieving and additional support is organised to address the reasons for this. Although the school is taking steps to improve attendance, it has yet to make significant inroads in reducing long-term absences of Pakistani pupils who take extended holidays to visit their home country.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders are ambitious for the school and have set challenging targets in order to raise attainment. They have refined the systems for target-setting and tracking pupils' progress so that they involve all teachers and hold them accountable for the pupils' progress. Strong leadership in English and participation in a programme to improve pupils' awareness of sounds and letters are accelerating progress in reading and writing. Robust monitoring of teaching and learning leads to individual performance targets for each teacher and has been successful in raising teaching quality, though not yet to the level

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required to ensure good progress for all pupils. Many new strategies are at an early stage of development and have yet to show their full impact in the outcomes of national assessments. Some middle leaders have greater influence than others in driving improvements in their subject. The governing body is representative of the diverse community, well informed and committed to improvement. It provides rigorous challenge to senior leaders and is aware of the need to visit the school more frequently to gather information at first-hand. The nominated governors and the deputy headteacher responsible for safeguarding are exceptionally diligent in ensuring that all aspects of safeguarding are exemplary. Excellent attention is given to managing the challenges of a split site.

The school engages well with most groups of parents and carers, and takes account of their views when making decisions. Regular 'H Mail' communications and the school website keep parents and carers well informed about school events and pupils' successes. Many parents and carers attend sharing assemblies and information evenings, and volunteer to help in classrooms and at events such as Eid and Diwali celebrations. These latter are just two examples of how the school is exceptionally effective in promoting harmony and unity amongst its diverse community. Celebrations of major religious festivals often involve sharing food and are greatly appreciated by parents and carers and the local community. Pupils' awareness of different cultures and ways of life is further heightened through strong links with a school in Zambia and a small rural school in Buckinghamshire. While the school is exceptionally good at valuing cultural diversity, it has yet to ensure full equality of opportunity for all pupils through consistently good teaching.

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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the school, children's skills are often lower than expected for their age in communication, language and literacy, and understanding of number. These are given high priority in both Nursery and Reception and, as a result, children make good progress. By the end of Reception, attainment is close to average levels. In a Reception class, children were observed reading simple books with confidence and enjoyment, and blending sounds as they worked out unknown words. Teachers and assistants work together well to plan and support children's learning through imaginative themes and an effective balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. In the Nursery, outstanding learning is driven by the children's own ideas and suggestions. They delight in exploring the exciting outside area with its rich variety of resources and possibilities for imaginative, physical and social play. Inside, some children donned hard hats as they hammered and banged on the construction site while others chose to sit quietly and paint a picture.

In Reception, teaching, although good, can sometimes vary in quality. In some lessons, exceptionally good planning and an exciting range of activities engaged children particularly well as they made preparations for a 'bear hunt' the following day, an imaginative way of introducing children to their future Year 1 classrooms on the other site. Outside, children explored different textures as they 'travelled' through 'goeey mud' and cold water while others created their own stories to act out in the 'bear cave'. Where teaching is less effective, learning is directed too heavily by adults and there are fewer opportunities for children to learn independently through play and exploration. Well-informed leadership and strong teamwork are driving improvement. Teachers share expertise and support each other. Every effort is made to engage and involve parents and carers in their children's learning through regular personal contact and suggestions of how to support their children's learning at home. Excellent attention to children's health, safety and well-being ensures that they grow in confidence and feel secure.

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 inspection team received 74 responses from parents and carers to the questionnaire, which is much lower than average. The very large majority of these parents and carers are happy with the school. A small minority expressed concerns about a number of aspects of the school which were followed up by the inspection team. In general, the inspection findings reflected the views of the majority of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hamilton Primary 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 667 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	51	32	43	2	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	43	58	29	39	2	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	24	46	62	8	11	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	26	41	55	10	14	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	23	31	42	57	9	12	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	27	40	54	12	16	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	34	42	57	6	8	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)	21	28	42	57	8	11	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	27	42	57	8	11	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	28	35	47	11	15	6	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	20	43	58	11	15	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	16	22	41	55	9	12	4	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	28	41	55	11	15	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamilton Primary School, High Wycombe HP13 6SG

We enjoyed our recent visit to your school, and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us about your learning. We could see how much you all enjoy school and that you get on very well together. Hamilton has been through a lot of changes recently. At present, the school is satisfactory, but it is improving strongly because the school leaders and governors are doing lots of things to help you learn better. These are some of the good things we found.

- You behave well in lessons and around the school, and you enjoy taking responsibility and helping others.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy, and most of you take part in the outstanding range of sports activities provided by the school.
- The school is exceptionally good at keeping you safe. It is also brilliant at helping you and your families, from many different backgrounds, to get on well together.
- The staff take good care of you, and you told us that there is always someone there to help if you have any worries.

The school's leaders and governors have identified all the right things that need improving. There are three main things that we have asked them to do.

- Help you to achieve higher standards in mathematics, especially those of you who are capable of achieving Level 4.
- Ensure that you are taught well in most of your lessons so that you all make equally good progress.
- Encourage you all to attend school regularly, and reduce the amount of time some of you take off for extended holidays, as this interrupts your learning.

All of you can help by continuing to work as hard as you can and coming to school every day.

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector

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