

Harbinger Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100904
Local Authority	Tower Hamlets
Inspection number	376481
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katy Bennett-Richards
Headteacher	Mandy Boutwood
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. A total of 11 lessons taught by 11 teachers were observed and meetings were held with the senior and middle managers, representatives of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, teachers' planning and data on pupils' progress, together with a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding and protecting pupils. A total of 54 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were scrutinised, together with 28 from staff and 133 from pupils.

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 Early Years Foundation Stage in getting children ready to learn and to maximise their progress.
- The extent of pupils' achievement from their individual starting points.
- The effectiveness of the largely thematic curriculum in strengthening skills in literacy and numeracy.
- The impact of the school's intention to make pupils 'global citizens'.

Information about the school

Harbinger Primary is bigger than the average primary school. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average. The majority of pupils at the school are of Bangladeshi heritage, but in all, a total of 22 languages are spoken. Nearly three quarters of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has Healthy School Status. It operates a breakfast club for an hour each morning before school gets underway.

A new deputy headteacher joined the school last year to complete the current senior leadership team.

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

Harbinger Primary is a good school. Under the effective leadership of its experienced headteacher, the school implements its vision of creating an inclusive community in which all have the opportunity to thrive. There is a strong commitment to create a school that values equality and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels below expectations for their age. Most make good progress across the areas of learning, including the high proportion of children who speak English as an additional language, so they start Year 1 broadly in line with standards found nationally. By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is broadly average. The school's sophisticated tracking systems show that, by the time current pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they are on track to be performing a little above the national expectation. This is in spite of the fact that the proportion of pupils joining the school part way through their primary education is above average. In the current Year 5, almost half the pupils started school elsewhere. Those who have spent all their primary education at Harbinger often do even better and make consistently good progress. Those pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because their needs are met effectively and their progress tracked with rigour to ensure that provision is meeting need. As a result, achievement overall is good.

The school is a strong community in which children from a wide variety of ethnic, social and religious backgrounds come together in a supportive and harmonious atmosphere in which they are extremely happy and safe. Nevertheless, despite the best efforts of the school, attendance amongst a small proportion of pupils is not as high as it should be. This limits the amount that these pupils get from their education. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding with the school maximising the benefits of having a school population that represents many cultures, creeds and ethnicities.

Much of the teaching seen was good and some was outstanding. Lessons are well planned and imaginative, with good pace that keeps pupils involved and keen to learn. Teaching assistants are full team members. Technology, such as interactive whiteboards, is used very effectively. However, there is also some inconsistency in the approach to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). As a result, the development of pupils' skills is uneven. The curriculum is good since it

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identifies the needs of the pupils as a major consideration. Much is taught through themes, but care is taken that the essentials of literacy and numeracy are also well covered. Enrichment is varied and includes many opportunities for visits, including residential trips. As a result of every pupil and their needs being so well known, the arrangements for care, guidance and support are outstanding.

Links with parents and carers are outstanding, supported by the home-school liaison officer and school social worker. The school provides a range of learning opportunities for parents and carers. Extremely effective links with a range of professionals and organisations support both the curriculum and the individual needs of pupils to very good effect. The ideal of helping pupils to see themselves as 'global citizens' means that community cohesion is strong.

With a clear and focused vision, the total commitment of staff, effective self-evaluation and good efforts to address issues raised in the last inspection, the school demonstrates that it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the systematic development of literacy skills by implementing a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics.
- Maintain efforts to improve attendance by making all families aware of the importance of regular attendance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' progress and overall achievement are good because they enjoy learning and are actively engaged. Learning opportunities are often imaginative and involve pupils developing collaborative skills. For example, a Year 2 class practised their letter sounds by helping to solve a detective mystery, while one Year 6 class proved itself adept at using the technology available in the classroom to reinforce their understanding of algebra. In another lesson, the pupils showed confidence in using a protractor to note angles, talking to their classmates about how they were working things out. In a supportive atmosphere, pupils are able to acquire knowledge, develop understanding, and learn and practise their skills well. They enjoy paired work or small group discussions, where they are able to talk with enthusiasm about their achievements. A large number of pupils join the school part way through their primary education and are quickly able to progress at the same rate as those who have only attended this school, although not all are able to fully close the gap in achievement. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and that of other identified groups such as those speaking English as an additional language, is also good. This is because their individual needs are identified, they have challenging targets and their progress is regularly monitored to ensure that interventions are effective.

Because learning is such a positive experience, behaviour is good and pupils take

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great care of each other. They have a strong understanding of safety, including the dangers of the congested roads and the waterways that are part of their lives. The views of pupils are valued and sought, and the school council is only one example of the ways in which the pupil voice is expressed and acted on. There is no evidence of bullying, and any incidents of a racist or homophobic nature are dealt with effectively. Pupils understand the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and nearly 70% take part in extra-curricular physical activities. They are fully involved in the school, sometimes working alongside teachers to give their opinions on important aspects of school life. However, the development of skills for economic well-being are hindered by attendance being no better than average. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to improve attendance and has successfully reduced the number of persistent absentees. However, attendance remains an issue, particularly the number of families who take their children out of school for extended trips out of the country. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Stimulating art work and displays representing many cultures are found throughout the school. Pupils celebrate the similarities and differences found in school, and the whole community is one where equality and diversity is valued and promoted.

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	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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Much of the teaching is good or better and so enables pupils to learn effectively. Teachers show good subject knowledge and use a range of styles to make lessons

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

* In some schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations for the pupils' age.

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interesting. In rare instances of challenging behaviour, they use a variety of management techniques to ensure that learning is not disrupted. Teaching assistants are very effective, whether supporting whole-class activities, or working to ensure that individuals receive additional help that enables them to make progress in line with others. The use of technology is very good, promoting many opportunities for effective visual learning. Assessment is used well, particularly to provide verbal feedback. Pupils are used to discussing their work with each other and self- and peer-assessment are notable features of many lessons. In the minority of lessons that are less effective, this is because they are too teacher-dominated, or assessment is not fully used to enable teachers to pitch lessons to match the needs and abilities of all the pupils. In the lower part of the school, there is a lack of consistency regarding the way that phonics are taught on occasions and this can have an impact on the development of pupils’ literacy skills.

The curriculum is good because it is imaginative and engaging, frequently being topic-based. Suitable adjustments are made to meet pupils’ individual needs so everyone is able to learn and make progress. The wider curriculum is enriched by a variety of trips to venues around London and further afield, encouraging pupils to broaden their horizons beyond their immediate locality. Sometimes, these wider opportunities are very well supported by excellent partnerships, such as those that have promoted the arts and sport. Care, guidance and support are outstanding, reflecting the detailed knowledge the school has of all its pupils and its commitment to supporting those whose families might be in challenging circumstances. The breakfast club, run by the school, gets the day off to a good start for many pupils. This, along with other activities, promotes healthy lifestyles well, a fact acknowledged by a national award. From the outset, parents and carers are welcomed as partners in the education of their children, while the arrangements for pupils arriving at or leaving the school provide support and encouragement at potentially unsettling times. This strong partnership also helps to ensure that pupils are safe and able to thrive.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

One of the questionnaires returned by parents and carers included the comment: ‘The leadership is excellent – approachable, supportive and well-respected both within the school and the local community, and we feel proud to be part of Harbinger.’ These views were typical and evidence indicates that there are significant

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strengths to leadership and management. One outcome is the creation of a school where everyone shares a clear vision and a commitment to improvement and excellence. Systems for monitoring the impact of teaching and learning are helping to raise standards and are supporting the professional development of staff. These monitoring systems also allow the school to develop key priorities and to focus effort and resources in order to meet them. The governing body has responded effectively to issues about its performance raised in the last inspection. The quality of governance is now good, and governors have an effective knowledge and understanding of the school so that they can challenge and question, supporting effective leadership. All statutory duties are carried out, including those for safeguarding, which is reinforced by detailed training and promoted by excellent links with other agencies which have duties for ensuring the safety of children. The effective analysis of data on every pupil enables the school to ensure that no one suffers discrimination. Home-school links are outstanding and include a range of ways in which parents and carers can engage in their own learning. Teachers keep a note of all parental contacts and, if there has been no link-up, the school will seek out parents or carers, being very well supported by its home-school liaison officer, welfare officer and social worker. Strong and very effective links with a range of professionals, coordinated to excellent effect by the special educational needs coordinator, ensure that necessary support is in place and being monitored for pupils with additional needs. This makes the school a strong and inclusive community. Effective community links locally and around the country, together with a commitment to the ideals of the United Nations, make for good community cohesion, with the school acting as a key element of its local community.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Nursery with skills below, and sometimes well below, those typically expected. The good provision enables them to progress rapidly and, by the time they are ready to start in Year 1, their skills are broadly in line with expectations. The Early Years Foundation Stage unit is a well-equipped, stimulating and welcoming learning environment. Strong and effective links have been developed with parents and carers. There is an excellent balance between child- and adult-initiated activities and in the use of indoor and outside areas. Children learn well and develop good personal qualities such as independence, sharing and collaboration. Teaching is good overall, but there is some inconsistency, such as in the approach to promoting early phonics skills. Leadership is good because the leader has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development. She has created an effective team and has a good grasp of the data, and consequently a good understanding of the progress of every child. Inclusion is a strength, so that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and full participants. Safeguarding is a priority that enables children to thrive in a supportive environment.

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

Although the number of responses to the questionnaire was below average, there was a good level of support for the school. One typical comment said: 'My daughter loves going to school, loves learning, loves all the teachers, loves the routines. I feel fully informed and I really like the way they involve me and all the other parents.' The inspectors feel this is an accurate reflection of some of the strengths of the school. Some questionnaire responses reflected a degree of disagreement and inspectors made sure these were fully looked into. However, in areas such as helping parents and carers to help their children learn, promoting healthy lifestyles or ensuring good behaviour, the inspectors found that the school is performing well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harbinger 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 345 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	63	19	35	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	59	20	37	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	27	50	22	41	3	6	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	37	28	52	1	2	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	23	43	28	52	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	23	43	25	46	6	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	39	27	50	5	9	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)	18	33	26	48	4	7	1	4
The school meets my child’s particular needs	18	33	28	52	3	6	3	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	20	37	26	48	5	9	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	35	28	52	4	7	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	44	25	46	2	4	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	29	54	20	37	3	6	1	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harbinger Primary School, Tower Hamlets, London, E14 3QP

I am writing to thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspectors on our recent visit. You go to a good school that does its very best to ensure that each of you achieves the very best that you can.

We were most impressed by your good behaviour and the care you show towards each other. From what you said, it is clear that you like your teachers and teaching assistants a lot. They are very committed to you and they work so well together to enable you to do your best work. Lessons are good and planned carefully so that the needs of every one of you are addressed. The headteacher and the other school leaders have helped your teachers to make a very exciting school. The good range of trips and visits, and chances to join in lots of activities such as sports or learning to play an instrument, adds fun and enjoyment to your learning. You told us that you feel safe at school, and you certainly take good care of each other. We saw no evidence of bullying and you work together very well in lessons.

Even good schools can do things to make them even better, and we have asked your school to do the following.

- Make sure that all teachers work in the same way to help you practise your skills in reading and writing.
- Try to improve attendance by helping you and your families to understand the importance of coming to school every day, unless you are too ill to attend.

If you continue to work as hard as you do now and to enjoy your learning, you will go on doing well. On behalf of all the inspectors who visited your school, I would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Groucutt
Lead inspector

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