

Howard Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101725
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	376616
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Dunn

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Morley
Headteacher	John Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2007
School address	Dering Place Croydon CR0 1DT
Telephone number	020 8688 4216
Fax number	020 8688 2199
Email address	office@howard.croydon.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw 13 lessons taught by eight staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils, parents, carers, staff and a representative of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning and monitoring information, policy documents and records, minutes of meetings of the governing body and a range of pupils' work. They also analysed questionnaires returned by pupils and staff, and 119 responses from parents and carers.

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

- Current rates of progress for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' progress in writing.
- The consistency of provision across the school, including how well it is customised to meet the needs of different groups.
- The rigour with which leaders and managers at different levels monitor and evaluate the school's performance and their impact in securing improvements.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and the proportion that speaks English as an additional language is much higher than average. Similar proportions of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities and while the numbers are falling overall, there are an increasing number at the higher levels of need. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. A charitable group, Mulberry Bush, provides the nursery and before- and after-school provision and these were not part of this inspection.

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

The quality of care, guidance and support at Howard Primary is exceptional and is one of the most significant outstanding features of this good school. It makes a major contribution to the outstanding outcomes the school secures for its pupils, including their outstanding achievement. 'Staff seem to genuinely care about the development and care of each and every child,' was how one parent put it. Pupils make good progress to attain high levels by the time they leave. They are rightly proud of their achievements, displayed extensively throughout the school, helping to create the vibrant and purposeful learning atmosphere.

Pupils enjoy school, reflected in high levels of attendance. They have an extremely strong voice in their education and well-being and the school seeks and uses pupils' views to influence numerous aspects of its work. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles and they report feeling safe at school at all times. All of these aspects of the school's work are outstanding, along with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Children make a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Positive relationships with adults support them to engage satisfactorily in activities and they begin to develop independence. However, though they enjoy the tasks and activities provided, these do not always have enough challenge to promote consistently good gains in their learning. Similarly, in the rest of the school, though teaching is good overall, some satisfactory teaching remains, particularly where teachers do not adapt work well enough to meet the needs of different groups, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This leads to inconsistencies in rates of progress across the school. Progress in writing lags behind reading and mathematics, and for boys in particular is largely satisfactory. Though motivated by writing for real purposes and the activities teachers use to stimulate ideas, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise, develop and apply their skills to produce longer pieces of writing.

Leaders at different levels, including the governing body, are relentless in seeking further improvements and 'Reaching for excellence', the school's motto. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher work effectively together and embed their ambitions for the school well. Reflective of many positive comments from parents and carers about the long-serving headteacher, one commented how he 'is always visible and available'. Significant improvements the school has made since the previous inspection, including raising pupils' achievement from good to outstanding,

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demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further. The considerably increased effectiveness of the governing body ensures it is now an important factor in this good capacity. Together with the school's leaders, governors have an accurate understanding of the school's performance and the plans to tackle the areas requiring improvement. The significant strengths in pupils' outcomes, enhanced by the school's excellent partnerships, mean that the school provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage to good by:
 - making procedures for observing and assessing children's learning and development more consistent, including precisely establishing children's starting points
 - using this information to make sure activities are always sufficiently challenging to promote good gains in learning
 - improving the quality and use of the environment and adults' interactions so that children are always purposeful and productive when they select their own activities.

- Ensure teaching is consistently at least good and moves towards outstanding by:
 - improving planning so that teaching and tasks consistently meet the learning needs of different groups, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - reducing the amount of time in lessons spent on teacher-led input
 - ensuring marking consistently shows pupils how to improve their work and always giving pupils opportunities to respond to their advice.

- Accelerate progress in writing, particularly for boys, so that it is consistently at least good, by:
 - giving pupils frequent opportunities to develop their writing skills and stamina in extended writing tasks
 - ensuring pupils know clearly the individual next steps they need to take to improve their writing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

All sizeable groups of pupils make good progress overall, including pupils who speak English as an additional language. Successful action taken by the school as part of its 'closing the gap' work has accelerated and secured good progress for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. However, across the school progress varies from satisfactory to outstanding, though with no particular pattern. The school's own tracking data show that progress accelerates as pupils move through Key Stage 2, though even this is not completely consistent. Consequently, pupils' progress is good rather than outstanding, despite pupils' high attainment by the time they leave. The

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proportions attaining the highest levels in English and mathematics are much higher than average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress, though rates are not quite as rapid as for their peers. In lessons, pupils mostly engage well in their learning, motivated in particular by the real-life contexts of many of their tasks. For example, pupils in Year 2 were excited and worked enthusiastically in a mathematics lesson that required them to use their measuring and problem-solving skills to explore what size celebration cards for Christmas, Eid or Diwali needed to be to fit comfortably into available envelopes. Pupils’ high level of basic skills prepares them well for the next stage of their education and life beyond. The school has correctly identified that pupils are not always fully adept at using and applying these skills, especially when involved in independent investigations or problem-solving.

Pupils usually behave well in lessons and during less-structured times. They have an excellent understanding of what constitutes safe and unsafe situations. Strong involvement in anti-bullying strategies, including the adoption of important roles such as ‘bully-busters’, reflects both this and the excellent contribution pupils make to the life of the community. Similarly, as excellent ambassadors for the promotion of healthy lifestyles, the school council previously met regularly with the cook to discuss school lunches, and is now involved in the tendering process for a new contractor. Pupils’ substantial contribution to the wider community ranges from charitable donations, to performing in the local area and to extensive recycling, including collecting rainwater to use for the school allotment. Pupils of all backgrounds mix extremely well in a range of social settings, developing a very good insight of the similarities and differences that exist within the diverse, but extremely inclusive school community. The work on display that results from pupils’ strong engagement with wide-ranging cultural and multicultural experiences creates a rich and stimulating environment in which to learn.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will	2

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

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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Guidance and support for all groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, is of high quality. Excellent links with other professionals and specialists enable the school to tailor support specifically for individuals identified at the higher levels of need. Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the care they receive. It has an extremely positive impact, on not only pupils' well-being, but also their achievement. This is because adults focus strongly on developing pupils' confidence and self-belief. They give freely of their time between lessons to help pupils when they require additional help.

The good-quality curriculum meets the interests of pupils well. Curriculum leaders rightly have plans to develop more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative and problem-solving skills. A wide range of excellent partnerships with other agencies, organisations and schools enhance pupils' experience and make a significant contribution to their outstanding personal and academic development.

Teaching usually engages and motivates pupils well. Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively to draw links between subjects and place learning in real-life contexts for pupils. The inconsistencies in pupils' progress link mainly to the small proportion of satisfactory teaching that remains in all key stages. A well-planned lesson in Year 5 about perimeter secured pupils' good achievement because teaching was enthusiastic and pupils were actively and purposefully involved in activities. However, teachers do not always plan in sufficient detail to ensure that lessons consistently meet the needs of different groups within the class well enough. At times, pupils spend too much of the lesson listening to the teacher, limiting available time to make quicker progress at their own level. Good questioning by teachers encourages pupils to reflect and deepen their understanding. Teachers regularly give very good verbal feedback to pupils, as seen in a lesson in Year 6 where the teacher prompted pupils to develop and extend their answers. Marking of written work often shows pupils what they have done well and what to improve, though teachers do not do this consistently well. Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity to respond to the advice, so the impact can be lost. Clearly displayed targets help pupils to understand the areas they need to work on, though they do not always know precise, individual targets to improve their writing.

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

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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?

The positive response of staff to the headteacher’s tirelessly high expectation has created a very positive atmosphere. Leaders at different levels work well together and are increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating the school’s effectiveness. These processes have a good level of rigour, including action taken to tackle identified weaknesses. Leaders have effectively secured a good pace of improvement, focused on appropriate priorities. The school sets itself challenging targets, though leaders agree there is room for greater precision in the plans and milestones to achieve these. This is primarily why equality of opportunity is good rather than outstanding. Guided by the skilled and insightful approach of the Chair, the governing body now provides school leaders with good levels of support and appropriate challenge regarding the school’s performance. It is developing effective systems to underpin the drive for further improvement by, for example, establishing ways to monitor the progress and impact of planned actions more precisely. The school is exceptionally proactive in its partnership working, sharing its own expertise with others, as well as sourcing support that will benefit its own pupils.

The school is a strongly cohesive community that provides pupils with a rich experience due to the diversity within it and effective links beyond. The school’s evaluations clearly identify the positive impact this has on pupils’ personal development. However, the school has not fully developed national links to deepen pupils’ understanding of contrasting communities. Adults and pupils do not tolerate discrimination of any kind and racist incidents are extremely rare. The school carefully tracks the performance of different groups of pupils and gaps between them are closing, such as the accelerating progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Established and effective policies and procedures effectively safeguard pupils. Regular training relevant to adults’ differing roles ensures the school adopts and follows good practice consistently.

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	1

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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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in their learning. Whole-class teaching, focus-group work and self-chosen activities usually interest and engage children, offering them adequate challenge. Adults identify correctly children’s capabilities by observing their development. However, processes for gathering and using these observations are not effective nor consistent enough to precisely establish children’s starting points, or use the information to promote quicker gains in learning. Satisfactory provision for children’s development across different areas of learning extends indoors and outdoors, though sometimes children’s choices are restricted and the outdoor area is not consistently well used. Adults interact well with children in focus-group activities, but there is not enough engagement with children as they make their own choices in learning and play, so their activities sometimes lack enough purpose. Children have opportunities to develop their early writing skills across a range of activities and adults encourage them to use and apply their knowledge of letter sounds well through these. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and plans rightly prioritise this area for improvement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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Views of parents and carers

Well over half of parents and carers returned a questionnaire, which is a much higher response rate than usual. Most parents and carers expressed positive views about the school. The overwhelming majority are happy with the school overall and agree that the school keeps their children safe, is well led and managed, and that teaching is good. A small minority of parents and carers added comments to their questionnaires, the majority of which were positive. A number particularly praised the efforts of the headteacher and staff in striving to make the school the best it can possibly be. The most repeated concern was the very small minority who would like better or more frequent communication about their children's progress. The inspection found that the school's engagement with parents and carers is good, and the school has imminent plans to extend its work here further, including through providing information for parents and carers online.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Howard 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 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 209 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	74	62	41	34	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	73	61	43	36	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	65	55	50	42	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	54	46	39	7	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	82	69	34	29	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	73	61	42	35	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	55	48	40	4	3	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)	59	50	47	39	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	68	57	39	33	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	47	54	45	7	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	44	56	47	6	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	75	63	41	34	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	75	63	40	34	2	2	1	1

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.



5 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Howard Primary School, Croydon, CR0 1DT

Thank you for the lovely, warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and finding out all about your school. Thank you also to those of you who completed our questionnaire. You told us that you enjoy school very much and feel extremely safe when you are there. We can see why it is a good school with a number of outstanding features.

The care, guidance and support shown to you by adults, the school's partnerships, your achievement, attendance, contribution to school and wider community, and many other aspects of your personal development are all outstanding. Teaching and the curriculum are both good. Children make a sound start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Those who are responsible for running the school do a good job and are always seeking ways to make it even better for you. To help them with this we have asked them to do some important things;

- improve children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage by giving children more challenging activities to explore
- make teaching better by shortening the time spent in lessons listening to the teacher, giving you more time to work on tasks that are not too easy and not too hard, and making sure marking always shows you how to improve your work and gives you chance to respond
- help you all, particularly boys, to make quicker progress with your writing by making sure you know how to improve it and giving you more chances to write for longer periods.

You can all help by always trying your very best, particularly when given longer writing tasks to do.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Lead inspector

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