

Harrow Gate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111643
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	378328
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Susan Brown HMI

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	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lester
Headteacher	Jackie Warburton
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Susan Brown
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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 22 lessons or part lessons including two which were jointly observed with the headteacher. Two of the observations were for extended periods. Inspectors listened to pupils read and met with groups of pupils to talk about their work and their experiences of school. Inspectors also scrutinised the work in pupils' writing and mathematics books in two year groups. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and plan for improvement, records of pupils' attainment and progress, minutes of governing body meetings, attendance data and safeguarding records. They analysed 112 inspection questionnaires completed by parents and carers and those submitted by staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Harrow Gate Primary is larger than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also higher than the national average. The school meets the current floor standards which set the government's expectations for achievement and progress. The school runs a breakfast club. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a period of significant turbulence with a very high level of staff turnover and a number of interim headteachers. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2011 and a permanent senior leadership team since Easter 2012.

The school has an established process of early transition for pupils. During the inspection, 44 Year 6 pupils were being taught in a local secondary with 13 remaining in this school. All other pupils had very recently moved into the classes where they will be taught from September.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This satisfactory and rapidly improving school has emerged successfully from a period of significant turbulence. The school is not yet good because pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are in need of further improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- All pupils are now making satisfactory or better progress. They enter school with skill levels well below those expected for their age. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach standards that are broadly average. Pupils' progress in reading is improving. Younger pupils use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to read and spell unfamiliar words. Older, less-able pupils have a limited range of alternative strategies when they encounter difficult words.
- Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Work is generally well-matched to pupils' abilities and provides an appropriate level of challenge. This is not always the case when pupils are choosing activities or working independently. Where marking is most effective, pupils have regular opportunities to correct and improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. Most pupils say that instances of bullying are rare and handled well by staff. No disruptive incidents were seen during the inspection. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing although attendance is not yet in line with the national average.
- Leadership and management are strengths of the school and all staff are fully committed to taking the school forward. Accurate self-evaluation is followed by challenging and well-focused improvement plans which are monitored rigorously. Targeted professional development and effective performance management have brought about significant improvements in the quality of teaching. The school's information on the performance and progress of pupils, which was a significant weakness, is now reliable. Gaps in pupils' prior learning, such as those in mathematics for pupils in Year 4 and 5, have been identified and are being tackled effectively.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that they are consistently good by:
 - identifying and correcting pupils' misconceptions more promptly during lessons
 - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to correct and improve their work
 - improving attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.
- Build on existing good practice in the school and improve teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that when older pupils work independently as individuals or in groups the tasks set always include an element of challenge
 - ensuring that when younger pupils choose activities these are carefully planned opportunities to consolidate and practise their developing skills
 - ensuring that older pupils read for meaning and that they have a range of strategies with which they can tackle unfamiliar words.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge levels that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in relation to communication, language and literacy and their social and emotional development. There is now a very strong and effective emphasis in the Early Years Foundation Stage on the development of children's social and communication skills. This has a positive impact on their progress across all areas of learning. A small group worked well with a teacher to make up a story about a magic key using appropriate story book language. They listened to each other and took turns in developing the story. Children leave the Reception Year below, but not significantly below, national expectations.

This emphasis on literacy continues throughout the school. Year 1 pupils were observed writing rules to support their right to be healthy, happy and safe. They applied their knowledge of different openers for sentences and developed their understanding of how to join two ideas together using words such as 'because' and 'but'. In Year 5, pupils were able to use a much wider range of openers and connectives. In addition, they were developing their knowledge and understanding of adjectives and adverbs to describe characters and settings in order to make their writing interesting to readers.

Pupils' books, lesson observations and the school's own assessment information show that throughout Key Stage 1 and 2 all groups of pupils are making satisfactory and often good progress. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2011, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below average. This year, standards in mathematics are broadly average and they have improved in both reading and writing although they remain below average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been well below average but pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to reach expected standards. As they move through the school pupils develop an ability to evaluate their own work. They know their targets and understand what they must do to improve.

Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals make the same progress as their peers. Their needs are identified accurately, well-targeted support is put in place and its effect is regularly evaluated.

Younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to read and spell unfamiliar words. They enjoy books and read and write with confidence. Older pupils show an increasing confidence in both reading and writing. Many spoke confidently about the criteria they use when choosing what to read. They have favourite authors, consider recommendations from friends and teachers and read what they call the 'blurb' on the back of a book before making a final decision. Less-able older pupils use phonics to read unfamiliar words but if this does not work they do not have a range of alternative strategies. As a result, they sometimes continue without a clear understanding of what they are reading.

Parents and carers say that their children make good progress. Inspectors found progress to be satisfactory overall but improving for the reasons outlined above.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory and an increasing proportion is good. Good teaching is characterised by teachers' secure subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils are encouraged to use subject specific vocabulary accurately, for example in mathematics, to articulate what they are learning and what they need to do next. Regular and rigorous marking ensures that pupils know how well they are doing. Teachers identify areas for improvement and then ensure that pupils have regular opportunities not only to correct their mistakes but also to practise and apply what they have learned.

When they are working with the whole class or a group, teachers use assessment information well to plan tasks that build on pupils' prior learning and challenge them to improve. They model the skills and behaviours that pupils are to learn. This was seen, for example, during introductions to literacy lessons and during guided reading with small groups. When older pupils are working independently, teachers do not always provide activities with sufficient challenge to promote progress. Similarly, when younger pupils are choosing activities, these are not always structured sufficiently well to ensure that they are consolidating and practising their developing skills. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs enjoy lessons. Teachers provide tasks carefully matched to their learning needs and teaching assistants provide well-focused support and challenge.

Relationships in lessons are very good both between pupils and between pupils and adults. This supports their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and contributes to their increasing confidence. Pupils' good behaviour ensures that teachers can concentrate on specific groups for considerable periods of time. Occasionally, teachers do not move around the class often enough to pick up and correct pupils' misunderstandings promptly. Younger pupils were provided with a range of fun ways in which they could practise forming letters and numerals, in glitter trays, foam and on whiteboards. However, when some pupils formed their letters incorrectly this was not observed and therefore not corrected.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of pupils typically behave well. Their positive attitudes to learning contribute significantly to their satisfactory and often good progress. In lessons they are motivated, enthusiastic and keen to contribute. They move from one activity to another and around the school with a minimum of fuss. The school has well-established routines and consistent expectations of behaviour. During the inspection, lessons flowed smoothly even though pupils had only very recently moved to their new classes.

Relationships with adults are positive: pupils are courteous to visitors and kind to each other. Pupils recognise and talk about the rights of others, for example the right to speak and be listened to. They take care of resources and have pride in the presentation of their work. All parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire said that their child felt safe at school. Most thought there was a good standard of behaviour at the school and that any cases of bullying were dealt with effectively. Inspectors agreed. All pupils spoken with reported feeling safe and happy in school. They say that on the rare occasions when bullying occurs they know what to do and they trust adults in the school to sort it out. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe especially when using the internet and mobile telephones.

Attendance has improved as a result of the high priority given to it by senior leaders but it remains just below the national average.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have a very clear focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Members of the governing body are well informed about the school and its performance. They are passionate about the success of the school and determined to provide appropriate support and challenge.

Following the appointment of the current headteacher much has been achieved. There have been improvements in achievement, attendance and the quality of teaching. The responsibility for taking these improvements forward is distributed widely and not dependent on any one individual. As a result, the school has good capacity to improve further. Leaders at all levels recognise that there is more to be done to ensure that all teaching in the school is good so that pupils' achievement can continue to improve.

Procedures for assessment and tracking produce reliable information and teachers generally use this well to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. At a school level, leaders and managers analyse the information rigorously to evaluate the performance of groups of pupils and intervene quickly if there is any potential underachievement. As a result, the achievement of all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, has improved. The school has good links with external agencies which support pupils in overcoming any barriers they may face in their learning or behaviour. School leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination well so that no pupil is falling behind.

The curriculum provides a rich and varied range of experiences which take account of pupils' interests. This motivates and engages them. It contributes positively to their improving achievement, good behaviour and positive attitudes. Together with a well-planned

programme of visits, visitors and out-of-school activities, it promotes effectively the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

The school provides an inclusive and welcoming environment for pupils. A thriving breakfast club gets the day off to a good start for many. Staff are on duty to welcome pupils at the start of the school day. They record any comments from parents and carers and follow them up where necessary during the school day. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harrow Gate Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 8DE

On behalf of the inspection team, I want to thank you for the very warm welcome that you gave us when we visited you recently. We enjoyed our time with you. You were keen to talk with us, read to us and explain how things work in your school. I would also like to thank you and your parents and carers for returning our questionnaire.

Harrow Gate is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. Your achievement is satisfactory and that is improving too! You and your parents and carers told us that you feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. You get on very well together. You know your responsibilities and you respect the rights of other pupils and adults. Your good behaviour and positive attitudes make an important contribution to the success of your school.

The headteacher, teachers and governing body are committed to doing their best to make sure that the school continues to improve and these are the things we have asked them to work on:

- improving your progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- making all teaching as good as it can be.

You can all help by coming to school every day and trying your best in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Susan Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector

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