



Homer First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109873
LEA Windsor and Maidenhead LEA
Inspection number 278299
Inspection dates 24 January 2006 to 25 January 2006
Reporting inspector John Earish AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Testwood Road
School category	Community		Windsor
Age range of pupils	5 to 9		SL4 5RL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01753 867436
Number on roll	172	Fax number	01753 865398
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Gill Berksoy
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Hunter

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Homer is a popular, smaller than average first school situated to the west of Windsor. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. Children start school in the term following their fifth birthday and spend up to two terms in the reception class. Year 1 children start in September in the term after they are 5. Attainment on entry to Reception varies considerably from year to year and is broadly average, with a significant number who are better than this. The number eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good and the inspectors agree. Pupils enjoy school and learn to become responsible and reliable members of the school community. They achieve well because the teaching, curriculum and guidance they receive are good. The good teamwork between all members of the staff generates a calm and positive learning environment. All these positive features are underpinned by good leadership and management. Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Children make sound progress in the two terms they are in school. They settle into school routines quickly because of the welcoming, caring family atmosphere that pervades the school. However, some aspects of physical development are limited by the current provision for children to learn through outdoor play. The pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are confident and considerate to one another and behave very well. Care and welfare are good. Staff keep a close check on pupils' progress but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to boost their independence by checking on their own progress and helping each other improve their work. Even though the school judges itself to be good, there is no complacency. The school knows itself well and is clear about what improvements need to be made to maintain standards. The school is developing methods to assess the impact of new initiatives on pupils' progress so that the effectiveness of their actions can be measured. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in 2000. The school has good capacity to make further improvements and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

* Improve provision in the Foundation Stage by increasing opportunities for outdoor learning and evaluate the impact of these changes on children's progress* Provide more opportunities for pupils to check on their own progress and help each other to identify improvement to their own work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Most pupils achieve well. National test results at the end of Year 2, for reading, writing and mathematics have been well above average for the last three years. Pupils continue to achieve well and well above average standards are maintained until they transfer to the middle school at the end of Year 4. Good achievement is the outcome of good quality teaching which allows pupils to learn effectively, the good use of assessment to match work to different ability groups, and pupils' outstanding attitudes to school, their relationships and enthusiasm. As a result, all pupils regardless of ability, gender or background achieve well. Although this varies with each intake, children have broadly average skills in most areas of learning when they enter the Foundation Stage. Children learn enthusiastically and make sound progress so that by the end of the reception year most reach the expected goals and many exceed them. The school has rightly recognised that the existing outdoor space

limits some aspects of children's physical development and is currently converting this area to an 'outdoor classroom'. The school sets suitably challenging targets for pupils, based on the detailed evaluation of their prior attainment, and meets these targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As one pupil commented, 'Our school is like a great big family'. The oldest pupils in the school are proud to take on extra responsibilities, for example becoming 'playground friends' to help younger pupils play games or resolve problems. They say this helps them understand that, 'You can't just think of yourself'. This caring and thoughtful attitude extends beyond the school. For example, pupils speak articulately about the similarities and differences between lifestyles in developing and developed countries. Pupils enjoy school very much. Their attendance is good and they behave very well. They say that bullying and racism are not problems, particularly as older pupils are trained to approach younger pupils who 'look sad' to offer help and advice. From their earliest days in school, pupils learn that it is important to stay safe and have a healthy lifestyle. Even the youngest pupils are aware of how to eat healthily, keep fit and stay safe. The high priority the school places on valuing and developing all pupils as individuals means that pupils thrive and grow in confidence and maturity during their time at the school. Pupils acquire well the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as skills in information and communication technology (ICT), that will equip them for later life and learning. They make an excellent contribution to the school community through the school council, where their views are voiced and taken seriously. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their enterprise and financial skills. For example, they have devised their own money making schemes for raising funds for the Tsunami Relief Appeal including bring and buy sales and a 'Pampering Party' for mums. As a result, they are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching and learning are good. Some aspects are outstanding. Teachers' detailed lesson planning and very good relationships with pupils mean that work is matched well to needs. Teachers and teaching assistants are good at both challenging the more able pupils and providing additional support for those who need it. For example, pupils in Year 2 worked productively on a literacy task because the teacher and the assistant had made it very clear what they wanted them to do. This not only resulted in a very good pace to the activities but consistently good achievement. The most effective teaching is characterised by the frequent use of effective questioning to check the full extent of pupils' understanding, to clarify misconceptions and consolidate new ideas. Adults use the responses to provide highly effective help for those with specific learning difficulties or whose progress is slow, and to stretch those who are talented.

The school is reviewing and refining its systems for checking on pupils' progress and setting targets for them. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly and teachers provide them with helpful comments on how well they are doing. However, teachers provide fewer opportunities for pupils to help each other to identify improvements in their own work and to check on their own progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is of good quality. Pupils enjoy a broad and interesting range of work that promotes their enjoyment of learning from the time they enter school. However, opportunities for some aspects of the children's physical development are limited by the current provision for outdoor learning. Activities are planned carefully to ensure a good range of experiences that are relevant to the pupils' work in different subjects. These include a very well planned programme to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional skills so they understand how to stay safe and healthy, and contribute to the community. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT through learning in other subjects. For example, pupils use ICT to draw and write about their personal goals for the year. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to school including artists, musicians and a professional circus performer. These additional activities have a positive impact on pupils' confidence and self-esteem and greatly increase their enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Pupils are well-known to staff and their individual needs are carefully considered. They monitor the progress of boys and girls, those with learning difficulties or disabilities and take sensitive action to support pupils who may be more vulnerable. They work well with other agencies to ensure that pupils benefit from specialist help and support. Pupils themselves say that they have many people they can turn to for help and they value this greatly. A number of parents commented on how the school makes, 'Every effort to ensure the best for every child'. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of their children's progress. Procedures to keep children safe are up to date and understood by all the adults in the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management are good. The headteacher's emphasis on high expectations and challenging work is a key element in securing the good standards and achievement of all abilities and backgrounds. Self-evaluation is accurate and is used well to identify areas for improvement, for example, enhancement to the outdoor learning for the youngest children. This is an example of how good leadership is identifying a weakness in the learning and is then dealing with it. The school is

developing methods to systematically evaluate the impact of these changes on the progress that pupils make. Good teamwork between all members of the school community is a strength of the school. For example, the views of parents and pupils are regularly sought and used to plan school improvements. Subject leaders monitor their areas of responsibility and make regular reports to the governing body. These activities contribute to an ethos where improvement is actively sought by all who value the school, and ensures good capacity for future improvements. Governance is good. The governors are well informed about events and developments and are supportive of the work in school. They play a full part in identifying areas for development and keeping a check on progress. Governors are diligent in complying with statutory requirements and carry out their roles and responsibilities conscientiously.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to tell you what we think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn. We enjoyed seeing you at work and at playtimes, and liked talking to you.

Yours is a good school and there are lots of things that we like about it. Some of them are:* You are able to learn in a very friendly and caring school. You behave really well and get on very well with each other* The headteacher and teachers are very good at helping you to do your best* You listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and try very hard in your lessons* You are given responsibilities which you enjoy and carry out very well* Your teachers spend a lot of time looking at what you have done in class and working out how to help you to make your work even better* The school council represents your views very well and the older children help in the smooth running of the school.

Your headteacher, and all of the other people who help run your school, are working very hard at making sure that you get the very best education. They are always trying to make improvements. We have asked your headteacher and governors to explore ways for you to check for yourselves on how well you are doing in school and to help improve each other's work. We have also asked them to provide a new outdoor learning area for the youngest children. We enjoyed being in your school. We hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.