



Hardy Mill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105189
Local Authority Bolton
Inspection number 287147
Inspection date 13 November 2006
Reporting inspector Stephen Wall

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Belmont View
School category	Community		Harwood, Bolton
Age range of pupils	3–11		Lancashire BL2 3QJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 333770
Number on roll (school)	229	Fax number	01204 333772
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr J Cowburn
		Headteacher	Miss C Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2003		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Hardy Mill is an average sized primary school. It is situated in a residential suburb of Bolton and serves an area of predominantly privately owned housing. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and nearly all have English as their mother tongue. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs. The school has held Investors in People status since 1997.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. Judged modestly as good by the school, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. So too is their care, guidance and support. The school gives good value for money because it uses its resources effectively to promote above average standards and good achievement. It has made good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in bringing greater consistency to the quality of teaching and learning.

On entering the school one is immediately impressed with vibrant displays of pupils' work and cheerful, smiling people, both pupils and adults. This is an exceptionally happy school where relationships are of the highest order and help create a welcoming, nurturing and caring environment in which pupils feel safe. They work and play together harmoniously. They love coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning, as shown by their well above average attendance. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils are polite and courteous. By the time they reach Year 6, they have developed into confident and mature young people well equipped for their future success. Parents hold the school in high regard. Typical parental comments were: 'My children have blossomed at Hardy Mill, academically and physically'; 'My children have grown in confidence and have come a long way since joining the school'; and 'We feel this school has a huge amount to offer the young ones. We feel fortunate that our children attend Hardy Mill.'

Children enter the Reception class with average levels of attainment. They make good progress because the school nurtures them effectively as learners so that they develop very positive attitudes and inquiring minds. Purposeful teaching and a curriculum matched to pupils' needs enable them to carry on making good progress and achieving well in Key Stages 1 and 2 where standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. The school has raised significantly the number of pupils achieving the higher levels in mathematics at Key Stage 2 by increasing the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils and using teaching assistants very effectively to work intensively with them. It is now turning its attention to writing where too few pupils achieve the higher levels. A range of initiatives has been introduced to bolster writing, such as the introduction of writing journals and making targets for writing more rigorous. However, the school has too few teaching assistants at present to enable them to be used as intensively and to such good effect as in mathematics.

Pupils enjoy lessons because teaching is well planned and lively. At the end of play times and lunch it is a pleasure to see how quickly and enthusiastically they prepare for work. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to set tasks which really engage the pupils' interest and involvement. Relationships in classrooms are very strong and enable the pupils to grow in confidence as learners and work together respectfully and harmoniously. Teachers mark pupils work exceptionally well and provide detailed and helpful comments so that pupils know what they need to do to make it better.

Good leadership and management provide the school with a real sense of purpose. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, sets a positive and 'can do' approach across the school which is evident in the happy and positive attitudes of the pupils. Leadership and management promote good teamwork that places the development and care of pupils at the heart of all it does. Partnerships with other agencies and organisations are extremely effective and contribute really well to pupils' well being. There is no complacency. This is an effective school constantly seeking ways to do even better. As a result, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in writing at Key Stage 2.
- Increase the number of teaching assistants so that they can provide more effective support in a wider range of subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school because they have a real appetite for learning and approach their lessons with enthusiasm. Good achievement starts in the Foundation Stage where children acquire good learning habits. From average entry points many progress to exceed the levels expected of their age group by the time they enter Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2005 were above average in English, mathematics and science. In 2006 results were similar but the number of pupils achieving the higher levels in mathematics continued to improve because of the intensive support focused on this area. The school met its challenging targets overall in 2006 but recognises that too few pupils are achieving the higher levels in writing at Key Stage 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. Assemblies and trips out to a variety of places of worship including a local mosque promote tolerance and understanding. These are times when pupils broaden their cultural horizons through learning about other races and religions as well as providing time for spiritual reflection.

Pupils understand the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. The school encourages healthy eating, much to the pupils' appreciation. 'I now eat much more fruit and vegetables and I've persuaded my family to do the same,' one pupil proudly pronounced. Large numbers of pupils take advantage of the good range of sporting activities available to them after school.

The school council gives pupils the opportunity to play an important part in the school community. The pupils say it does a really good job and has, for example, brought

about significant improvements to the seating areas in the playground. Pupils take on positions of responsibility such as class and assembly monitors. They play a role in the wider community through fundraising for a variety of charities, for example.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan their lessons well to include a variety of activities to keep pupils engaged and motivated. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and in a lively manner. As a result, pupils have little time to indulge in off task activities and make good use of time. Teachers use information and communication technology effectively, particularly the electronic whiteboards, to add extra interest and variation to lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively taught and included very well. Where teaching assistants are available, they are very effective in helping raise levels of achievement, such as in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs because it is built around the principles of motivating and engaging pupils in their learning. Its emphasis on practical, 'hands on' work, especially in science, is popular with the pupils and helps capture their interest and imagination. The school is developing a themed approach to teaching subjects other than English, mathematics and science. In part, this is designed to raise levels of literacy, particularly writing skills, by extending the opportunities pupils have to practise creative writing in a variety of scenarios. This is popular with the pupils: 'It's so much more interesting than doing separate subjects like geography or history, so we learn much more.'

A good range of extra activities such as sports, drama and visits to places of interest enriches the pupils' education. It helps them adopt healthy lifestyles and adds extra enjoyment, reinforcing further their inquiring attitudes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils grow and develop at Hardy Mill in safety and harmony. Policies and procedures to ensure pupils' safety are firmly embedded and understood by staff. Vulnerable children are identified early and the school's effective links with outside agencies are used effectively to support them when necessary. The school provides a stimulating environment in which the care, guidance and support of the pupils are given the highest priority. 'Unless children are well cared for and happy, they cannot learn effectively' is the underpinning principle of all the school does. Pupils were genuinely amazed to be asked if they felt safe and well cared for in school. 'Of course', was the simple reply, because they had never imagined it could be otherwise. Similarly, when asked if they

felt confident in approaching teachers with any problems, their look of puzzlement at the question spoke a thousand words.

Support for pupils' academic progress is very effective in sustaining their good progress. Teachers' comments in pupils' books give detailed advice on what they need to do to improve their work. Individual targets are used effectively so that pupils know what they need to do to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management provide the school with an accurate, if occasionally modest, view of its overall effectiveness and its strengths and areas for further improvement. The views of a wide range of stakeholders including parents and pupils are taken into account when planning for improvement. For example, parental concerns at the frequency and quality of homework have led to improvements in provision and quality. The recent improvements to the buildings and facilities were well planned to provide maximum impact on teaching and learning, for example by extending facilities for the Foundation Stage to make it less crowded and more attractive. The quality of teaching and learning are monitored regularly and accurately by the headteacher. Subject coordinators are developing well into their role by becoming more effective in monitoring standards in their areas and identifying and spreading good practice. The work in mathematics, such as making oral and mental starters more consistently effective across the school, is bearing rich fruits.

Governors know the school well. They are very supportive and, importantly, not afraid to ask pertinent questions of senior managers when the best interests of the pupils are at stake.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school. I enjoyed talking to many of you. What you told me helped me greatly in reaching my judgements.

I think you go to a really good school. I was very impressed with how well you behave and how much you enjoy being at school. You all get on with each other extremely well and with the adults in school. Your teachers take really good care of you and go to a lot of trouble to make your lessons interesting so that you make good progress as you move through the school. Your headteacher is doing a really good job in making sure the school is successful and in making sure it is always looking for ways to improve.

To make your school even better, we are asking for the school to do two things:

- make sure that more of you achieve the higher grades in writing at the end of Key Stage 2
- provide more teaching assistants so that they can help you more effectively in your learning.

I am sure you will continue to work hard, especially at improving your writing, and help your teachers bring about these improvements.