

Harwood Meadows Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105194
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287149
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Janette Corlett

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 on roll	
School	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Lloyd
Headteacher	Ms Siobain Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Orchard Gardens Harwood Bolton Lancashire BL2 3PS
Telephone number	01204 333702
Fax number	01204 333703

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a popular primary school of average size, which historically has served an area of privately owned residential accommodation. Due to a decline in the local school-aged population, other local schools have closed or are in the process of closure, resulting in the transfer to the school of pupils from outside the immediate area, some of whom are comparatively less advantaged. Most pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal.

The Nursery serves a much wider community. This means that typically around 30% of children do not continue on into the Reception class. Similarly, around 30% of the children in the Reception class have not attended the school Nursery and have no prior experience of Nursery education.

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. In its own judgement of satisfactory, the school has been overly modest, relying too much on historical data and taking a rather narrow view of achievement. This has led to an underestimation of the impact on pupils' progress of recent improvements in teaching and learning brought about through the clear direction of the headteacher and senior leadership team. There is a shared commitment among staff, well supported by governors, to raise standards and improve provision. Staff work well as a team and share their expertise.

A number of factors have distorted the school's performance data, including some inaccurate Year 2 assessment within the school and the influx of pupils from a recently closed school. Pupils' achievement and the standards they reach are now good.

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development and well-being. They are confident, have high self-esteem and are well prepared for the world of work. They understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and say that they love coming to school because 'learning is fun'. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and contribute to the local and wider communities. Attendance is good and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

The good curriculum is rich and stimulating, and pupils experience a broad range of learning activities both in and out of the classroom. There is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and many well planned opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in other subject areas.

The school provides good standards of care, guidance and support. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are very confident learners, secure in the knowledge that it is perfectly acceptable to make mistakes and that teachers are friendly, approachable and always willing to help. Teachers set high expectations for the pupils and support them well in understanding what they are to learn and what they need to do to improve. Progress is accelerating because staff make lessons so enjoyable and exciting for pupils.

The Nursery provides a stimulating and secure environment for young learners. Children enter the Nursery with standards that are typical for their age, settle quickly into the school routines and make good progress. However, many children join the Reception class without the benefit of prior Nursery education. By the end of the Reception, overall attainment is still broadly average. Nevertheless this represents good progress. The school at present does not have secure evidence of children's attainment on entry to the school in order to support more effective self-evaluation based on accurate measures of children's progress. The school has improved well since the last inspection, particularly in its provision and use of ICT. It has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish procedures to ensure secure judgements on children's levels of attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage.
- Provide accurate assessments of pupils' attainment of the end of Year 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and build on their learning well as they move through the school. Achievement is good. Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with average skills and levels of development. They make good progress. By the end of the Reception Year overall the children reach the levels expected of children of their age. The level of overall attainment is affected by some of the children who start the Reception Year having had no previous experience of nursery education.

By the end of Year 2, standards are above the national average. Teachers' assessments in the recent past have been slightly inflated, particularly for the higher attainers. The school has recognised the need to ensure that future assessments are completely secure. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6), and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they achieve well. Similarly, more able pupils are given stimulating tasks in the classroom and they reach challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They very much enjoy all their activities which results in good behaviour and attendance. Pupils feel very safe in school and know how to live a healthy lifestyle. Their good achievement in basic skills builds a strong foundation for their future adult life and even the youngest pupils are able to share and take turns when involved in group or class activities.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. They are closely involved with other local schools, and raising money for charitable causes. The school council take their responsibilities seriously and develop skills that will help them as future citizens. The school is working towards an Eco School award which will give accreditation to their work on preserving the environment. The recent 'Ground Force' weekend was a fantastic opportunity for pupils, parents and staff to work together on developing the school grounds.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils know right from wrong, and work very well alongside one another. The school takes every opportunity to enhance their self-esteem.

Due to rich opportunities to explore a range of cultures and traditions, pupils gain a good understanding of the life and beliefs of people whose culture is different from their own. Pupils show respect and thoughtfulness towards others and maturely use opportunities to reflect and to learn from their reflection. They love coming to school and say that learning is fun.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The teachers have high expectations of pupils' commitment and their behaviour. Pupils rise to the challenges presented to them because teachers make lessons interesting and exciting. Planning is thorough and carefully based on a sound understanding of pupils' individual learning needs. Teachers are good at explaining exactly

what it is the pupils need to do to improve. They encourage individual thinking and make very sensitive use of assessment to help pupils develop their skills in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' skills are well beyond those expected in ICT because teachers are confident in their own skills and move pupils on at a pace appropriate to their ability, rather than their age. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well, for example, to model good writing and to explain a range of effective strategies for mathematics problem-solving. Teachers have good subject knowledge and present pupils with a safe, secure and yet challenging learning environment. Pupils say teachers are always friendly and helpful. This means they are confident learners with no fear of making mistakes. As a result, pupils readily contribute to classroom discussions and share their ideas with others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets pupils' needs well and is enriched by an enviable variety of external visits to places of interest and visitors invited to come into the school. Older pupils have the opportunity of visiting an outdoor residential centre, which promotes their personal and social development. There is a very strong drive to raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science which has led to the current good standards in these subjects and pupils' good progress. Teachers plan engaging activities for pupils to practise their basic skills in all subjects. Pupils in Year 6 report that their teacher 'could find maths in anything'. Even historical research presented opportunities for converting percentages to fractions!

In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum provides rich opportunities for learning through play and there are exciting activities to continue this learning outdoors.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are catered for very well in the small group and individual sessions provided for them and this helps them enjoy learning. Similarly, pupils identified as being gifted and talented have many opportunities to develop their skills through creative arts projects, themed weeks and the good links the school has established with other local schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's provision for care, guidance and support is good. All statutory procedures for safe recruitment of staff, child protection and health and safety are in place. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support and the school has good links with outside agencies to support them. Tracking of pupils' academic progress is good. It is detailed and well presented and leads directly to the establishment of challenging targets. However, teachers' assessments in Year 2 need to be more rigorous. Pupils know at what level they are working. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils could correctly identify how they were improving their punctuation and what needed to be included in their work to demonstrate how they would meet their target. Parents are included well in reviewing their children's progress and comment favourably on the approachable and supportive nature of the staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership, setting a very clear direction for the school. This has been communicated clearly to members of the senior leadership team who are 'as one' in putting this vision into reality. One of the results of this is that pupils' standards are above average, having improved significantly over the last two years.

Most pupils' work is rigorously checked, as is the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are well deployed enabling the school to give good value for money. Governance of the school is good. The governors meet their responsibilities well and have a good range of expertise amongst their membership. They are well informed and have a good overview of the school and the challenges it faces. They are beginning to establish a position where they are able to consistently hold senior managers to account.

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Annex A

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

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?	2

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.

Annex A

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Harwood Meadows Community Primary School, Bolton, BL2 3PS

Mr Halford and I really enjoyed visiting your school and finding out how much you enjoy learning and have fun together. You were all very helpful and polite, and your teachers must be very proud of you.

We think you are doing really well. Harwood Meadows is a good school. Your lessons are exciting and interesting and you all work hard to achieve the challenging targets your teachers set for you. We also noticed how kind you are to one another, how you care for the environment and how you often help other people less fortunate than yourselves.

We are asking your teachers to provide a little more information on what you can do when you first come into school and how much you have improved by the end of Year 2.

I hope all Year 6 enjoyed the post-SATs party, even if your teacher did insist on you practising your skills in mathematics by preparing a proper budget and making sure that you gained good value for your money!

Thank you again for your warm welcome, courtesy and kindness. Best wishes for the future.