

Harrold Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109455
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number	288380
Inspection date	7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Jones 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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	135
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joanna Steer
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Kathryn Yelland
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2002
School address	The Green Harrold Bedford Bedfordshire MK43 7DE
Telephone number	01234 720312
Fax number	01234 720312

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harrold Lower is a rural, North Bedfordshire school sharing a site with Harrold Middle School. The pupils come from favourable socio-economic circumstances. The school serves the villages of Harrold and Odell, but 25% of the children are out of catchment. A very small proportion of children are entitled to free school meals. There are very few children from minority ethnic groups, and none have English as an additional language. The proportion of children with learning difficulties or disabilities is well below national average. The school has recently been awarded full accreditation for Healthy Schools.

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 many outstanding features. It is a fully inclusive school that warmly welcomes and cares for all children and their families. The dedicated leadership of the headteacher is a significant strength which, together with the whole staff's sheer enthusiasm for their work, provides a challenging and enjoyable start to learning. The school has the capacity to become outstanding and is certainly going in the right direction.

Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage where the effective provision ensures that the children settle quickly and achieve well. They make good progress and achieve standards that are consistently above average and often exceed the targets for their age. They make exceptional progress in their reading. This is due to the good, and often outstanding, quality of teaching which involves children in making choices in their learning and motivates them to try hard. Achievement in mathematics, although still above national average, lags behind achievement in reading and writing. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well because of the good support they receive from an experienced team of teaching assistants. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as, and often much better than, their peers.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Behaviour at the school is excellent and the pupils are able to take turns, share equipment and look after each other with kindness and sensitivity. Pupils take part in a variety of community events and raise large amounts of money for charity. They feel their opinions are listened to and the work of the school and Eco councils are taken seriously. The curriculum is excellent and pupils enjoy a wide range of enrichment activities and extra-curricular clubs, including enterprise, dance, art and music. Pupils understand the need for healthy lifestyles and enthusiastically take part in the many sporting and dance opportunities provided for them. The pupils are very well cared for and this is contributing to their desire to do well.

Leadership and management are good. There is a strong sense of supportive team work and motivation. Monitoring and evaluation are robust and accurate. Although the school has a very clear view of exactly what needs improving, targets in the school improvement plan lack precision and are not shared effectively with middle management. The school has excellent links with its local community of schools and this ensures a smooth transfer when pupils move to the middle school. The vast majority of parents are positive in their views about the school and feel the school 'provides our children with an excellent learning environment'. A lively website helps to keep parents informed about what is going on. However, a very small minority of parents do not always give the school the support it deserves; for example, a few parents take their children on holiday in term time which has an impact on overall attendance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics by raising the profile of the teaching of mathematics across the school.
- Sharpen the focus on target setting in the school improvement plan, and share targets more effectively with subject co-ordinators.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school has started to put into place Foundation Stage Profiles to secure accurate baseline information to measure progress. Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills slightly above those expected nationally. They make good progress in Reception and almost all meet or exceed national expectations. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to progress well. Year 2 test results in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently high for the last five years and those for reading have been well above national average. This good progress continues until the pupils leave in Year 4 and pupils do well in the optional progress tests they take. Pupils, particularly girls, do less well in mathematics. The school has recognised this and is introducing more investigative work into both mathematics and science. Pupils produce high quality art work because this is given high profile throughout the school. Gifted and talented pupils do well at the school because their strengths are identified early and they are given suitably challenging work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils show great care for one another, and help to keep themselves and others very safe. They trust the adults around them; speak highly of their teachers and show outstanding enjoyment of school. Attendance rates are above average. Pupils behave very well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are helped through trips and visitors to appreciate the range of diversity in modern Britain. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles and many put this into practice by choosing healthy options at lunchtime and participating in physical activities. They are well prepared for future economic well-being by a range of opportunities to take responsibility and develop enterprise skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. It is characterised by excellent relationships with all teachers acting as positive role models. Teachers have very good classroom management skills and use elements of competition to make learning exciting. Teachers plan lessons skilfully, usually meeting the learning needs of all pupils in their class, and with a good sense of pace and purpose. They use interactive whiteboards confidently to add interest and enjoyment to lessons. Occasionally, lessons are too dominated by brighter pupils and questioning is not spread evenly to include all, or pupils are kept for too long sitting on the carpet.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's vibrant and imaginative curriculum is exceptionally well matched to pupils' needs and interests. In Reception, pupils are provided with exciting and carefully planned learning that centres on creative play. Literacy is very well developed through all subjects. The excellent displays of pupils' work and activities reflect the breadth and quality of the learning opportunities provided for pupils. The creative curriculum, including art, dance and music is well developed and results in, for example, some very high quality productions. An excellent programme for

personal and social education makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. The school's achievement of the Healthy Schools Award is having a positive impact. The sports clubs are extremely popular and oversubscribed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This school takes outstanding care of its pupils. There is a highly effective system for monitoring pupils' welfare. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are robust and there are very good links with outside agencies. Guidance to pupils about their academic performance is very good and in lessons pupils often assess their own and the work of others. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress are rigorous and prompt action is taken to support pupils who are at risk of underachieving.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She has established a very effective senior management team that works very well to bring about continual improvement to provision. The role of middle management is less well developed and the subject co-ordinators do not yet take responsibility for their part in the achievement of the targets in the school improvement plan. These targets are not yet sharp enough to give measurable milestones in order for the subject co-ordinators to develop a sense of ownership. The governing body has been revamped and is now playing a much more active and challenging part in school life. Resources are managed very efficiently for the benefit of the pupils. There is a large financial surplus but this has been earmarked for future improvements to the fabric of the buildings.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	1
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	2
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	1
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?	1
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.

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	1
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	1
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

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harrold Lower School, Harrold, MK43 7DE

Thank you for all the help you gave me when I visited your school on 7 June. I enjoyed talking with you. You told me how much you enjoy being at Harrold Lower School. It is a good school with many excellent features. I thought you would like to know what was good about your school and how I thought it could get even better.

- The school is very well led and managed and there is a very good team spirit among the staff and governors, who want you all to do your very best.
- You enjoy the excellent range of lessons and activities that are provided for you and join in enthusiastically.
- The school council helps to make things better in the school.
- You know how to keep healthy by eating the right food and taking exercise.
- Teaching is good and you achieve well in your subjects, especially in reading.
- You showed great motivation and enjoyment in your lessons. You behave very well and look after each other.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and are well looked after. There is excellent guidance and support for those who need it.

Things I thought could be improved:

- You could do better work in mathematics
- The school plan could be improved

I wish all of you success in your studies and thank you once again for your help with this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools