



Harlington Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109511
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288406
Inspection dates 7–8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Middleton HMI

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

Type of school	First	School address	Westoning Road
School category	Community		Harlington, Dunstable
Age range of pupils	5–9		Bedfordshire LU5 6PD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525 752500
Number on roll (school)	166	Fax number	01525 752500
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C Munns
		Headteacher	Mrs P Story
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–9	7–8 November 2006	288406

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average lower school that serves the village of Harlington, but also takes 20% of its children from the wider area. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low as is the proportion whose first language is not English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly lower than the average.

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 which knows its strengths and weaknesses very well and provides good value for money. The school accurately judges itself to be good because of effective evaluation and clear analysis of data, which have helped the staff and governors to steer a successful course since the previous inspection. The school is very well placed to continue to improve.

The headteacher leads the school efficiently and effectively and is supported by a committed team of governors, senior managers, teachers and support staff. The children and their parents have high expectations of the school and the vast majority are not disappointed. Children enjoy school and achievement is good overall. Outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage enables the children to build on high achievement across all areas of their learning. They continue to make good progress and achieve standards in English, mathematics and science consistently above the national average. The individual needs of children are very well supported so that boys and girls with different abilities make good progress in their work and in their personal development. Social development is a strong feature. Children demonstrate their understanding of the school's values through positive attitudes and exemplary behaviour.

The children value learning because from reception onwards teachers make learning interesting and engaging. Improvements to information and communication technology (ICT) and self-assessment have contributed to the high level of participation and interest that children develop. Resources in and out of school are used skilfully to enrich the curriculum and the school has started to explore different ways of approaching and improving all subjects. This matches inspectors' judgements that emphasis should now be given to discovering and deepening skills across the curriculum following the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- To develop a framework to enable teachers and pupils to evaluate and track progress across all Foundation subjects and personal development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Most children start school with average skills and leave in Year 4 with higher than average standards in English, mathematics and science.

The children make swift progress in the Foundation Stage and outstanding achievement results because the work they are given is interesting and well matched to their needs. Good progress is evident through Year 1 and 2; standards in national tests are consistently higher than average across the board, for boys and girls. The school's good assessment data shows clearly that children in Years 3 and 4 continue to make good progress and are very well prepared to succeed at middle school.

The school sets challenging targets in English, mathematics and science and these are achieved because the teaching addresses the needs of different abilities effectively and children are well motivated to learn. In other subjects children generally meet the expectations of the National Curriculum although the range of achievement is less evident than in the core subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This is a good feature of the school; children enjoy lessons and this accelerates the progress they make. The children develop positive attitudes to school and respond well in lessons and extra-curricular activities. However there is limited evidence in lessons of children developing their independence and initiative. Attendance is above average. Behaviour is exemplary.

Social development is outstanding due to the care taken by staff. The children develop good relationships and cooperate well in lessons and at play. Almost all have an outstanding sense of right and wrong, guided by the school's values and the example set by staff. Children's spiritual development is good. They value opportunities for reflection and celebrate the achievements of others.

The school council makes a good contribution to school life. The children's contribution to the design of the new playground shows that they are able to take responsibility seriously when it is given. Their concern for the elderly and contribution to charities in the wider world also demonstrates understanding about the needs of the wider community.

Children demonstrate a good understanding of their own culture through literacy, the arts and history but show limited understanding of other cultures.

The children know how to stay safe and healthy and put their awareness into practice. Their ability to work together, solve problems, and good progress in basic skills are preparing them well for their future adult lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Parents are pleased with the good teaching and are right to think that their children make good progress as a result. Objectives are clearly and sometimes imaginatively shared; this enables children to understand what is expected. Assessments are accurate and actively involve the children, work is marked thoroughly and constructively so that children know how to improve and succeed.

Teachers make effective use of resources including computer technology to engage the children's interest. Lessons are diligently planned with the teaching assistants, who give good support to children with the greatest needs. In the best lessons teachers

skilfully combine their passion and expertise in the subject with precise knowledge about individual children; this enables children with different interests and abilities to understand challenging concepts.

In all classes teachers manage time efficiently to ensure that learning continues at a brisk pace. However, there are insufficient opportunities in lessons for children to build on the independence and initiative shown in the reception class. Nevertheless, opportunities for children to learn through play are promoted very well through the role of play leaders and stimulating outdoor facilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and outstanding in the Foundation Stage where there is a particularly wide and well structured range of opportunities for children to develop across all areas of learning.

In all years the curriculum is brought alive by effective use of the environment, visits to places of interest and visitors who add much to children's enjoyment of learning. The weekly timetable is enhanced by a range of occasional curriculum enrichment days and extra-curricular opportunities that enable children to develop new interests and refine existing skills.

Curriculum links between subjects help the children, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities, to develop and apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. However, knowledge, understanding and skills specific to different subjects are mostly developed through separate subject lessons. The school has initiated links with support agencies and other schools to ensure that curriculum provision for children who are gifted and talented in specialist areas is enhanced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares very well for the children and provides very effectively for their health and safety. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet requirements.

Effective work in partnership with parents, outside agencies and other schools ensures that children settle quickly into school, are supported well throughout, and transfer to their next school with ease. Most parents feel that the school keeps them informed through regular newsletters, progress reports and meetings. The contribution of parents to the school's evidence of values developed when children are out of school is a good example of effective partnership work that has the needs and interests of the children at the centre.

In the Foundation Stage assessment is used consistently across all areas of learning; this provides children and their parents with a comprehensive picture of their individual strengths and areas that need specific support. In all year groups strenuous efforts are made to provide good guidance and support that meets the needs of individual children including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Assessment data is

used very well to plan lessons, set individual targets and track progress, particularly in reading, writing and numeracy. However, it is inconsistent across other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is supported well by the governing body and the senior leadership team. The school is very well placed to continue to improve the quality and range of achievement and develop the personal qualities of the children to the full.

The head and deputy headteacher deploy their different skills and qualities very effectively to provide clear direction and support that enables staff and pupils to develop and succeed. The well focused monitoring and evaluation of outcomes, teaching and learning has contributed significantly to achievement in English, mathematics and science that is consistently above that achieved nationally and personal development that is good across all years and abilities.

The school's plan to involve coordinators of different subjects and aspects of the curriculum in monitoring and evaluating achievement, teaching and learning is accurate and timely. The recent thrust to increase the involvement of children in evaluating their own work, other children's achievements and the school generally complements this initiative. Governors play an integral role in monitoring and evaluation. Energetically led by a highly committed chairperson, governors provide good support and effective challenge.

Financial management is good. High quality resources, accommodation and staffing are deployed judiciously providing good value for money. A strong effort is made to inform and consult parents. However, a small but significant minority of parents would like clearer communication about how their views are acted upon.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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.

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	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

9 November 2006

Dear Children

Harlington Lower School, Westoning Road, Harlington, Dunstable, Bedfordshire. LU5 6PD

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. It was good to talk to you, look closely at the work you were doing and hear your views about the school.

We agreed with you that this is a good school. You have helped to make it a good school because you listen carefully in lessons, work hard and look after each other well. Your teachers plan your lessons carefully and make lots of lessons interesting by thinking of different ways for you to learn. The visits you are taken on, the visitors who come into school and the projects that you do on the computers are the favourites you told us about.

Mrs Storry knows what needs to be done to make your school even better. Her visits to your lessons have helped. Your teachers look closely at your work as well and are good at showing you what is good and what would make it even better. You also have good ideas about what you are pleased with and what you would like to improve. The school council are helping to improve the school too because they discuss your ideas in meetings and help to make the best ones happen. We really liked your ideas for the playground.

We have asked your school to keep up your good work in literacy, numeracy and science and see how well you could do in your other subjects as well. We also think that your work on values is going well and would like to see even more examples of the things that show how you use your values in school and at home.

Good luck in the future and enjoy the many good things that Harlington Lower School has to offer you.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton

Her Majesty's Inspector