

The Hawthorns Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109921
Local Authority	Wokingham District Council
Inspection number	288533
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Gray

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Bateman
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Hempson-Jones
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Northway Woosehill Wokingham RG41 3PQ
Telephone number	01189 791676
Fax number	01189 798199

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most and serves a generally advantaged area. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups is small and none are at the early stage of learning English. Pupils with learning difficulties represent a smaller proportion of the school than usually found. The school holds the Healthy Schools' and Eco-School awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils receive an excellent and exemplary education. The pupils themselves know this. One said, 'In lessons, we actually get on and act things out or do activities. We don't just sit there.' Their parents agree. One wrote, 'I am very impressed with Hawthorns Primary School and the care they take in looking after the pupils. I find that the teaching is excellent and both my children are happy at the school.' This is first-hand evidence of the outstanding care, guidance and support that pupils receive.

Pupils reach high standards by the end of Year 6 and their achievement is outstanding throughout the school. Children in the Foundation Stage have an excellent start to their schooling, because activities are planned in great detail and are tailored to their individual needs as a result of excellent assessment procedures.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent because they have a well developed understanding of what they owe to others. 'When I started I felt really welcome,' observed one pupil. 'What I like best is that people get on well with each other,' said another. Their sense of community is reflected in their keenness for their environment. Members of the gardening club use rainwater from the roof to water their organic vegetables. Pupils designed an information board for a local nature spot, giving details of plant and bird life.

Teaching is outstanding because teachers are successful in engaging pupils' interests. 'Teachers make lessons as fun as possible,' said one pupil. The curriculum is planned to bring subjects together, as in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were measuring trees to help them establish perspective in a study of a Rubens landscape painting. The school is in the process of planning a series of topics to bring together different subjects, to enable pupils to make the best use of the many skills they are learning.

Outstanding leadership and management are at the heart of the school's success. There is an unending drive for improvement, to ensure that there is no complacency. For example, recent work to make pupils' writing as strong as their reading has produced outstanding levels of progress across the school. This shows the school's excellent capacity to make further improvements. The headteacher is an exceptional leader and has full support from a team of excellent senior leaders and committed middle managers and other staff. Governance is also outstanding because their work not only helps the school to develop but also offers strong challenge to make sure that the right decisions are made.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no major issues to address because of the school's highly effective and accurate self-evaluation. The following issue is a chief priority in the current school improvement plan and is already being undertaken:

- Complete the planning to bring together the whole curriculum in the school's topics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children begin in Reception with skills above what is expected for their age, especially in their personal development. By the time they enter Year 1, they have made very good progress and standards are above the borough average, which is

higher than found in most schools. Standards by Years 2 and 6 are high, with significantly more pupils than average reaching the highest levels. Records show that most pupils are making extremely good progress in every class. Standards are also above expectations in information and communication technology (ICT) and very good art work is evident in pupils' topic books and throughout the school.

Boys achieve as well as girls and better than their national counterparts. Pupils with learning difficulties and from different backgrounds also achieve extremely well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding and are reflected in their very positive attitudes. Attendance rates are high. Pupils are enthusiastic and their enjoyment of learning is obvious. One parent's comments sum this up: 'My child really misses school during the holidays.' In discussion, pupils could think of almost nothing that they would change. There is a very strong sense of community and pupils are very proud of their school. Behaviour and relationships are excellent. All those pupils spoken to had no concerns about bullying. One child said 'We're friendly in this school and we sort things out.'

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have very good opportunities to reflect on their ideas and actions and their consequences. They eagerly accept responsibilities such as members of the school council, peer mediators and the eco-team. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and staying safe. They learn about other cultures and beliefs and show that they appreciate the importance of respect based on understanding. As one pupil said, 'People should do what they think and live their own life.' Pupils' high levels of basic skills and their outstanding personal development prepare them very well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Foundation Stage children are enabled to learn for themselves because of thorough planning and excellent use of conversation by all adults. Children were constructing their own boats to test in the tank outside. One girl found hers floated, but then observed, 'The bricks made it sink because they were heavy.'

It is clear in every lesson how much pupils enjoy their learning. One pupil described her experience: 'Lessons are interactive'. When asked what this meant, she said, 'We get to use the interactive whiteboard, search the internet and play games.' All teachers make very good use of modern technology. They plan lessons carefully to give different learning experiences to pupils of varying abilities. The effectiveness of this is shown by the consistent progress which pupils make from year to year. The marking of pupils' work is excellent and gives them plenty of guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and has a strong emphasis on developing personal and social skills, such as citizenship, lifestyles and environmental sustainability. The breadth of the work

on display and pupils' enthusiasm for a wide range of topics demonstrate very well the impact and high quality of learning experiences. The curriculum is innovative and there are developing links between different subjects which allow pupils to use a variety of skills in different and meaningful contexts. The school is working to finalise these plans. Provision for the performing arts is outstanding. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to show and develop their musical and dramatic skills. The curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities, which greatly extend pupils' learning experiences. There is excellent provision for pupils to experience the wider curriculum. For example, in Years 1 to 6 they have regular opportunities to learn French and there are specific thematic days related to areas such as science and design technology.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Clear procedures give pupils security and create a calm atmosphere in which pupils can learn. One pupil said, unprompted, 'I feel safe here because, if there is a problem, teachers will try to sort it out.' Parents are confident that their children will be well cared for. All child protection, health and safety requirements are fulfilled. The school regularly seeks pupils' views and has very good procedures to ensure that their views have a real part in the school's decision making.

The school has excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress. The information gained is used very effectively to provide pupils with challenging targets and to spot any who might need specific help. An excellent example is the 'roving team' of classroom assistants who can be drafted in at short notice to give extra help to pupils with learning difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership and clear direction provided by the headteacher, senior team and governors are among the main reasons for the school's continued success and improvement. The headteacher has moulded a cohesive team that shares a common goal. He has set high expectations and is an inspiring leader who has the confidence and respect of staff, governors, parents and pupils. There is a strong focus on pupils' personal development as well as their academic achievement. The highly motivated and enthusiastic leadership team knows the school well because of the excellent quality of the school's incisive self-evaluation process. Monitoring systems are highly effective and very good use is made of performance data to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards. Professional development for staff is equally effective in increasing their skills and helping them to further their careers.

Governors provide an extremely effective balance of support and challenge to the school. They have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school works hard to support and involve parents. Their views and those of the children are highly valued and acted on when deciding priorities for development. However, a few parents do not always find communicating with the school easy.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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?	1
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?	1
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	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

26 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Hawthorns Primary School, Wokingham, RG41 3PQ

The first thing I must say is that all the inspectors found you some of the politest children we have ever met. Thank you for your welcome and for your help in our work. You and your parents are very proud of your school and you have every reason to be so. One of you told me, 'I will cry on my last day at school,' and we can see why. We think it is an outstanding school.

There are lots of things we will remember. I enjoyed meeting the gardening club and was sorry I could not come and help (or watch) you dig up your potatoes. You told us how good and nourishing your school lunches are. We tried them and agree.

You reach high standards in your work and make excellent progress. The teaching is outstanding because most lessons interest you and work is set at the right level of difficulty. Teachers plan topics which help you to use a whole range of skills, such as in the lovely samples of 'William Morris' wallpaper I saw in your Victorian topics. You use your ICT skills well too in this work. The only thing I have asked the school to do is to complete the planning for topics like this one.

The headteacher is an excellent leader and all the adults in the school work hard to do their best for you. They are quick to spot when you need extra help and you told us they are good at sorting out any problems you might have. We really liked the way they mark your school work.

You have excellent attitudes to learning and enjoy all the extra things, such as drama and music, visits to places of interest and after-school clubs. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and are working hard to make yours an Eco-school.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at The Hawthorns and that those of you who are about to leave will be as happy in your new schools.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Lead inspector