

Haydon Abbey Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110276
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	288616
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

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	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jenny Hunt
Headteacher	Mrs Katherine Smith
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Weedon Road Aylesbury HP19 9NS
Telephone number	01296 482278
Fax number	01296 336709

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of high social and economic deprivation. Nearly half of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Most of these are of Pakistani heritage and many arrive with little or no English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average and increasing. Children's skills and understanding on entry to the school are well below average. There has been a high turnover of staff in recent years. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2006. The school is a member of the Excellence in Aylesbury partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Haydon Abbey provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. It is an improving school with some good features. After a period of some turbulence a stable staff team has been established. The new headteacher has made a very good start in harnessing the skills of a knowledgeable senior leadership team and enthusiastic staff to raise standards and improve provision for pupils. They are ably supported by a strong governing body. Together they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and a clear plan to address weaknesses. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed, indicating that the school has a good capacity to improve still further.

From their low starting points pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Children make a good start to their learning journey in the Foundation Stage. Good teaching and a stimulating learning environment mean that they quickly become confident learners. In Key Stages 1 and 2 teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and there are examples of strong teaching throughout. This is not yet consistent enough and, as a result, pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. Standards remain below average by the time they move on to secondary school. Although pupils have done very well in science in recent years, more able pupils do not do as well in literacy and numeracy. Expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not high enough in some lessons.

The school takes good care of its pupils. Vulnerable pupils are well provided for, including those with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school works very effectively with a range of outside agencies to provide the support they need. The school is developing its partnership with parents and enjoys the confidence of most. One, reflecting the views of many, commented 'I find the teachers very approachable and I am pleased my child is progressing well'. Academic guidance is also good. A new approach to target setting is giving pupils and their teachers a shared understanding of what they need to do in order to improve. Information on pupils' achievement is collected systematically but is not always used as effectively as it might be to track the progress of groups and individuals in order to help them achieve as well as they might.

Pupils' good personal development is a strength of the school. Mostly they feel safe, enjoy their education and have positive attitudes to learning. They take their responsibilities, as school councillors for example, very seriously. They are enthusiastic participants in the wide range of sporting activities provided, which contributes to their good understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Most pupils behave well and the generally consistent expectations of staff ensure that those that present challenging behaviour are helped to cope in the classroom.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There are some good links between subjects and information and communications technology (ICT) is sometimes used well to support pupils' learning. However, these links are not well established and opportunities are missed for pupils, particularly the more able, to think creatively about their learning and to develop their own ideas. The curriculum is considerably enriched through music and sport. It has recently been broadened further through the introduction of modern foreign languages, taking advantage of good links with a local secondary school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more able pupils are consistently challenged to achieve as well as they can in literacy and numeracy.
- Ensure that assessment information is used effectively to track the progress of individuals and groups to help them to achieve as well as they can.
- Develop consistent links between subjects, including ICT, to give pupils more opportunities to be creative and to develop their own ideas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make good progress in all areas of their learning in the Foundation Stage classes. Those who are at the early stages of learning English acquire the language rapidly because support is effectively targeted at the younger children. However, some have not reached the national goals expected of five-year-olds by the time they move into Year 1. At the age of seven standards have declined in recent years and were well below average in 2006. This was partly because there were a high number of pupils with learning difficulties in that group. It is also the result of frequent changes in teaching staff. Consequently, the progress of many of these pupils was unsatisfactory. Currently, more focussed teaching is leading to better progress for pupils in Key Stage 1 this year. By the age of eleven, standards in science have been above average for the past two years because of highly effective teaching. In English and mathematics standards remain below average with relatively few pupils reaching the higher levels. However, overall achievement is satisfactory from pupils' low starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and make similar progress to their peers. Pupils' satisfactory achievement in basic skills, together with good work habits indicates that their preparation for secondary education and the world beyond is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being, including the social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects is good. Their enjoyment of school is evident in their positive attitudes to learning, their keen participation in the range of additional activities and the good attendance of most. Pupils understand that their participation in sport helps them to keep healthy. One Year 3 pupil observed that it 'makes your heart beat faster,' whilst another knew that drinking water in the classroom 'stops you from being dehydrated'. They also know about the importance of a healthy diet although this is not always reflected in their lunch boxes! Pupils conduct themselves safely as they move round the school. The majority of pupils feel safe although a small number worry about bullying. They are clear that behaviour is improving and that adults help them to sort out any problems they may have. The school council play a prominent role in the life of the school. For example, they produce a very professional looking magazine and decide which charities the school will collect money for each year. Pupils are also involved in the wider community, for instance, they host a party at Christmas for local elderly residents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of good teaching throughout the school and in the Foundation Stage and Year 6 it is consistently good. This is where pupils make the most rapid progress. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and generally manage their classes well through consistent expectations of their behaviour. As a result pupils have good attitudes to learning and behave well for the most part. Occasionally, when some teachers were less successful at managing behaviour pupils were less focussed on learning. Teachers generally plan well to meet the needs of all pupils and are very well supported by a skilled team of teaching assistants who make a good contribution to the quality of education. However, in some lessons more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to achieve as well as they might. For example, they are sometimes kept waiting whilst tasks are explained to the whole class and not given enough time to develop their own ideas. Teachers often use questions effectively to deepen pupils' understanding. There are examples of good marking which tells pupils precisely how they might improve their work. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. Similarly not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum for the development of basic skills is satisfactory. Pupils with specific needs and learning difficulties are well supported and benefit from smaller booster groups to develop literacy and numeracy skills. However, the needs of the most able pupils are not fully met because they are not always given tasks that allow them to think creatively and develop their ideas. The school's identification of and support for able, gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage of development.

A strength of the curriculum is the good range of clubs which are popular with pupils and valued by parents. Good use is made of visiting specialists especially in music and sports. These extra activities allow pupils to develop their talents and contribute to their enjoyment of their education. Links with local secondary schools extend the curriculum and raise aspirations, especially for older pupils. For example, the local secondary school inspired Year 6 pupils, with help and ideas from parents, to design a new bridge for Aylesbury resulting in some carefully constructed models. To help pupils make sense of their learning some links are made between subjects. Such links, however, especially in ICT, are not consistently planned for in all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school places a strong emphasis on the level of care and support it offers to pupils. Cultural diversity is celebrated and harmony promoted successfully. A clear behaviour policy is understood by pupils which, when implemented consistently, has an increasingly positive effect on their personal development and in promoting a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school. Healthy lifestyle is being given a high profile through the very good sports provision and the pursuit of the Healthy Schools award. Good opportunities exist for pupils to learn about adopting safe practices. Year 6 pupils speak with enthusiasm about their visit to Hazard Alley. Pupils are

clear that the new target setting system is helping them to improve in numeracy and literacy. However, although the school has a system for tracking pupils' progress, they acknowledge that it is not yet sufficiently robust to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher has rapidly gained the confidence of staff and governors and established a common vision and set of values which are understood by all in the school community. Accurate and perceptive self evaluation indicates that the new leadership team know what needs to be done in order to raise standards and improve teaching and learning. A rigorous monitoring programme has been put in place by the headteacher and this has led to some improvements in teaching. Members of the senior leadership team and curriculum leaders are developing their skills in monitoring and evaluating in order to build the capacity of leadership at all levels. There is evidence that this work is bearing fruit and is beginning to raise achievement. The governing body has also experienced some difficulties with recruitment and retention in recent times but are now well placed to move forward. They provide a wide range of experience and skills and offer a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. They have successfully managed a difficult budget situation in recent years and the school is in a much healthier financial situation to enable it to develop its provision.

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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?	3
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	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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
The attendance of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Haydon Abbey Combined School, Weedon Road, Aylesbury, HP19 9NS

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our time at Haydon Abbey and you all helped us by being so friendly and welcoming. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

We found that the school gives you a satisfactory quality of education. It is getting better and some of the things it does are good. All the staff work hard to make sure that you are safe and well looked after. You told us how much you enjoy school and your attendance has improved a lot. Well done! You also think that behaviour is improving and that staff will help you to sort out any problems you may have.

You make a good start in the Foundation Stage classes where the staff help you to settle and get used to school. Teachers help you to make satisfactory progress as you move through the school. The new targets are helping you with this but we have asked the teachers to use the information they have about you to help you to get even better. As you get older some lessons are interesting and exciting. In other lessons you do not always have enough chance to think things out for yourselves and work is sometimes too easy for you. We have asked the school to improve this so that some of you do even better especially in literacy and numeracy. We have also asked them to link some subjects together a bit more and to give you more opportunities to use ICT to help you in your learning. You enjoy the interesting and exciting extra things you do in school. All the sport you are involved in helps you to keep fit and healthy.

Your new headteacher has made a good start and is given lots of help by all the staff and the governors. They have got plans to make things even better for you. We think the things we have asked them to do will help. Good luck to you all.

Yours truly

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector