

Horn's Mill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111129
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	288869
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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	169
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Debbie Owen
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Doughton
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002
School address	Denbigh Close Helsby Frodsham Cheshire WA6 0ED
Telephone number	01928 722935
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average size school. Most pupils are White British and about 14% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, including about 3% from Traveller families. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school provides facilities in its building for Helsby Link Club which offers before and after school care. This provision was inspected separately in November 2005. The school leases ground to a pre-school playgroup and this provision was also inspected separately, in December 2006. Both inspection reports are available on request from the school. The school was awarded the Active Mark for its provision of sports opportunities in 2007. It is also a member of two learning networks, one to improve the achievement of higher ability pupils and the other to support its work with special educational needs and inclusion, including the achievement of the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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. It makes a real difference to children's lives because the commitment to the social and emotional well-being of all pupils is apparent in every aspect of its work. This leads to outstanding behaviour among pupils and is seen in their enjoyment of learning. Good provision in the Foundation Stage enables the Reception class children to reach or exceed their early learning goals, preparing them well for acquiring the essential skills of reading, writing and number. In Years 1 to 6 pupils make good progress, achieving well to reach standards above the national average in English, mathematics and science in Years 2 and 6. However, some of the Key Stage 2 pupils are right when they think they could improve their learning if they understood better how to move from one National Curriculum level to the next. Relationships are exceptionally good and pupils speak warmly of the care the school provides and the opportunities they have for personal growth. This view is confirmed by the overwhelming majority of parents, as seen in comments such as, 'Horn's Mill is a very well balanced school, providing our children with the social skills they need throughout their life.' The headteacher's leadership brings about effective teamwork, seen in the contribution that all senior leaders make to improvements in teaching, learning and achievement. The school's own accurate evaluation of its work reflects its aspiration to be a self-improving school, giving it good capacity to improve, as seen in the action taken to meet the targets to improve standards in English, mathematics and science. However, the recently drawn up action plan for improving information and communication technology (ICT) is not incorporated into the overall school improvement plan and while standards in ICT by Year 6 are satisfactory, the rate of progress across year groups varies because the school does not robustly assess pupils' acquisition of ICT skills.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are exceptionally polite and courteous and show a high level of concern for the well-being of others. Attendance is good. Pupils are happy and enjoy school. 'My child finds school fun and looks forward to attending every day' was a common theme from parents. Pupils value the very supportive relationships they enjoy with each other and with the adults who work with them. Their awareness of the school's rules and their response to them shows their maturity in behaving responsibly and independently. They agree that their confidence in the adults around them helps them to trust someone if they are anxious or upset. Pupils know that bullying is wrong: they have a good understanding of how to deal with it if it should occur. Pupils in Year 6 say they feel well prepared for moving to secondary school. The school has effective systems to ensure that pupils are safeguarded.

This school provides good value for money. Good leadership and management, well supported by a committed governing body, give the school a clear view of its own effectiveness. The school sustains its impact by securing strong partnerships across the community, enabling it to measure the quality of its work against that of others. The value of these partnerships is seen in the work that has enabled the school to improve since its last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the assessment of ICT so that progress in the acquisition of ICT skills is consistent across all year groups.
- Improve the way in which learning targets are explained to pupils so that they have a clearer understanding of how to progress from one National Curriculum level to the next.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. National test results for 2006 show that they reach standards above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Progress is good in nearly all subjects, except ICT, where progress is not consistent, although pupils attain satisfactory standards by the end of Year 6. Children enter the school with skills similar to those of most four year olds. Their teachers recognise that the children are very inquisitive, giving them a good knowledge and understanding of the world. They exploit this inquisitiveness, tapping into the children's interests to move their communication, language, literacy and number skills on well. As a result, by the end of the Reception Year most children have reached, and some have exceeded, the Foundation Stage early learning goals and they are well prepared for the first year of the National Curriculum. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 so that, by the age of seven, pupils reach standards in reading, writing and number above the average found nationally. In Years 3 to 6, continued emphasis on the essential skills of reading, writing and number ensures good achievement for all pupils so that, by the end of Year 6, they reach above average standards in mathematics, English and science. The progress of pupils currently in Year 6, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, shows that they are on course to achieve the school's challenging targets. However, standards in writing are a little below those of reading as work to help pupils understand how to reach their learning targets for writing is not yet fully incorporated into the school's assessment programme.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good, with outstanding features.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. They are polite and friendly with each other and confident when talking to adults. They have outstanding attitudes to learning and good relationships with their teachers. Their good attendance reflects these attitudes. Pupils' good sense of moral and social responsibility enables them to contribute well to the life of the school. For example, the Year 6 'buddies' help Reception class children at playtimes and have worked with them on classroom activities. Cultural development is good. A planned whole-school project with each class focusing on learning about a different country increased pupils' global awareness. Pupils contribute to the wider community through fundraising for charities and their campaign for all children worldwide to access education. Representatives of the school council reported how much they enjoy school. They are proud of the success of the anti bullying project. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, provided through assemblies and a personal, social and health education programme. Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles and are aware of the benefits of exercise. There are strong links with the local high school to develop sport and science and these links support arrangements for transition.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and occasionally better. In the outstanding lessons, teachers are skilled at making clear exactly what pupils need to do to show that they are making good progress. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and make good progress. Pupils with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. Lesson activities are well matched to pupils' ability. Where pupils are encouraged to assess their own work against the targets set for them, progress is rapid. However, in some lessons, higher ability pupils said that they would understand how to get to the next level of the National Curriculum if the steps they needed to take were explained more clearly to them. Teachers have a good relationship with their pupils and have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils listen attentively, concentrate and work productively. Teachers give good feedback to pupils during lessons and through constructive marking of work. Assessment is used effectively to assist planning and there is careful checking of pupils' work and progress during lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good curriculum is matched well to the learning needs of the pupils and meets statutory requirements. Learning is enriched by opportunities to take part in educational visits, celebration assemblies and musical performances which involve the whole-school community. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities available to develop and extend learning and enjoyment through, for example, netball and computer clubs. Pupils in Key Stage 2 value the opportunity to learn to speak French once a week. Workshops and performances led by visiting artists and musicians contribute well to pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Pupils also develop their musical ability through a well planned timetable of music lessons. The school has a broad programme of personal, social and health education which effectively raises pupils' awareness of how to stay safe and adopt a healthy lifestyle. This is supported by appropriate provision for physical education and links to the local secondary school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good academic support and guidance and outstanding pastoral care are a reflection of the school's commitment to its pupils' needs. For the quality of day-to-day emotional and social care given to pupils, Horn's Mill could not be faulted. The comment, 'As parents we can relax because we know our child is being cared for very well' was typical of the views expressed by parents about the quality of care shown to their children. The school's commitment to high quality care for pupils' well-being is reflected in how well each pupil is known to staff: pupils feel safe and know that there is always someone who will show interest in, and concern for, their emotional and social well-being. This makes it easy for them have the confidence to discuss any worries with someone when they have a problem to unburden. Pupils say that they trust the adults in school because they are treated with respect and fairness. The quality of care for pupils as individuals is reflected in their exceptional behaviour and great enjoyment of learning. Support for improving learning in English and mathematics is evident in the good use of assessment to set learning targets. However, some older pupils say that in some lessons, including literacy, they feel they could learn better if they had a better understanding of how to reach these targets: they want to understand what is meant by a National Curriculum level and how they can achieve it. Good value is added to the learning of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from the good guidance, support and care they receive. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership is good and the school is well managed. The headteacher has established a strong leadership team who know each other's strengths and work well together towards achieving the school's objectives. The strength of this team is recognised by the governing body, who provide a high level of support for the school's work. As a result the school works well towards achieving its mission to celebrate the full potential of each individual. Links with other schools help the school to achieve its aspirations. Parents value the school's clear commitment to their children's emotional and social well-being that helps them to enjoy learning and achieve well. Regular meetings of a parents' standing committee help the school to seek and respond to their views. It acts well on their suggestions: parents were pleased that their interest in finding out about their child's position in a class group, so that they could give more help at home, was taken seriously. The leadership team's accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness reflects their ability to analyse the impact of the steps taken so far to improve the school's work and what needs to be done to sustain this improvement: together, they have identified the correct priorities for improvement and set in place action to achieve them, giving the school good capacity to improve. Governors contribute well to this process. Their clear understanding of the school's work and their support for the vision and aspirations of the school's leaders enables them to give the school timely guidance and challenge.

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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	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?	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	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 Horn's Mill Primary School, Denbigh Close, Helsby, Cheshire, WA6 0ED

First of all, thank you very much for the welcome that you gave Mrs O'Keeffe,

Mr Snell and I when we visited Horn's Mill Primary School. You were very friendly and helpful. We were very impressed at how polite and well behaved you all are. We enjoyed our visit and it didn't take us long to realise that you enjoy learning very much. Thank you for all the discussions we had that helped us to find out how well your school works. You told us that you think you have a good school. I am sure that you will be pleased to know that we agree with you!

These are the things that we were most impressed by:

- your excellent behaviour
- your interest in the school's activities and your eagerness to learn. This means that you learn well and try your best to reach the standards expected of you
- you told us that you appreciate how well your school cares for you and always helps you to do your best, especially when you have any worries or concerns
- the work that the teachers are doing to make sure that you all learn as well as you should, even if sometimes you find learning difficult.

There are just two things that we would like your school to do better.

- We think the teachers could improve the way they check your learning when you practise new skills using the computers. Then they can be sure that you are all learning as well as you should.
- We were impressed that you wanted to know how to move from one level on the National Curriculum to the next. We have asked the teachers to give you better advice to help you to do this.

Mrs O'Keeffe, Mr Snell and I would like to send you our best wishes for the future. We hope that you all carry on trying your best and enjoying learning.