

Harwich Community Primary School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114843
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290054
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Matthews

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	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Lawrie Payne
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Allen
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002
School address	Barrack Lane Harwich Essex CO12 3NP
Telephone number	01255 245440
Fax number	01255 245449

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average size primary school situated in the port of Harwich. Staff and pupils have moved into this purpose-built school since the last inspection. The school is part of Tendring's Excellence Cluster and has a learning mentor, family support worker and family learning assistant. Pupil mobility is well above average. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals and a high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a small number are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Skill levels on entry to the Nursery for most, but not all, children is very low. The school has achieved the Investors in People award, the DfES Activemark for physical education and sports, and is working towards an advanced Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree that Harwich Primary is a satisfactory school that has made good improvements since its last inspection. However, it has not been a smooth ride since the school moved into its new building. Both pupil and staff turnover have been high and it has taken the school some time to develop its present stable staffing and its strong ethos. This is a very happy school, where pupils feel safe and valued and are expected to play an active role in its life. Pupils' personal development is a strength, with the work of the school council and prefects having a positive impact on the life and orderliness of the school. Parents have positive views of the school.

The school has worked successfully with the local authority to address weaknesses in pupils' attainment and improve the school's provision. The newly introduced Intensive Support Programme (ISP) for raising pupils' attainment is having a noticeable impact on pupils' progress in most classes. This is particularly so in Year 6 and Year 4 where extra classes have been created to drive up standards. Assessments show that attainment for Year 6 pupils is much improved on the previous year's extremely low results, with a noticeable increase in the number of higher achieving pupils. However, because the Year 6 group does have a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, attainment is still below average. The school is rightly aware that pupil achievement remains at the heart of its priorities.

Teaching is satisfactory, but many lessons observed during the inspection were good and some outstanding. However, the school's much improved teaching has not yet had time to have a full impact on standards through the school. Provision in the Nursery is outstanding and children get off to a flying start. This excellent progress is not sustained in Reception where progress is unsatisfactory and subsequently holds back pupils' attainment in Years 1 and 2. The curriculum is satisfactory but improving because it is now better adapted to take account of pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Highly skilled teaching assistants provide valuable support to pupils' learning in the classrooms and also take a leading role in the intervention work to help pupils whose learning and confidence need an extra boost. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress towards their targets. The strong team work and good levels of care make the school a safe haven for the pupils, who behave well and work hard. The behaviour and attendance teams also make an effective contribution to pupils' care and to their attendance, which is improving and close to national averages.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory but the recent staff reorganisation and newly-appointed deputy headteacher have considerably strengthened the management team. The headteacher has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses but has not consulted all school partners when evaluating its performance. The school has improved its systems for recording pupils' performance, but now has too much information which is preventing its effective use. Governance is satisfactory and governors are supportive and have an improved knowledge of the school's provision through their increased monitoring. With recent key appointments to the school's leadership and management and rising pupil achievement, the school is in a position to continue its improvements and gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the progress tracking systems are used effectively to enable the school to raise pupils' attainment and achievement further.

- Improve the provision in the Reception class.
- Refine the school's improvement planning system by consulting all school partners, and by ensuring the main priorities have the maximum impact on pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils' achievement is satisfactory but standards are still below average because of the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the above average pupil mobility. The proportion of Year 6 pupils with above average standards has increased this year, particularly in mathematics and science, because of improved teaching and greater challenge. Children start in the Nursery with particularly low attainment in language and mathematical skills. The excellent quality provision ensures children make very good progress in all areas of learning and in their personal development. They leave the Nursery confident and enthusiastic learners but these strengths are not consolidated in Reception where children's achievement is unsatisfactory. Teachers in Years 1 and 2 work very hard to make up for the deficiencies in Reception, and pupils in these years progress well. However, standards are still below average but have been improving in the last two years. Evidence shows that the new ISP initiative is helping teachers to raise standards. The reduction of class sizes by the creation of a new Year 4 class and two Year 6 classes demonstrates the school's determination to drive up standards and achievement further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to the clear guidance they receive and show respect for the school and each other. Because they are involved in developing class rules and clearly understand what is expected of them, they follow school routines well and act sensibly and safely. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe near water and on the roads. Older pupils care for others by formally taking on roles as prefects, by playing with younger pupils and by helping to run the healthy 'fruit and milk bar'. School council members represent the views of others well and their focus on healthy eating, and pupils' involvement in suggesting lunch menus, have resulted in healthier school lunches which many enjoy. Pupils have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and thoroughly enjoy opportunities to take part in activities to raise their fitness levels. They contribute well to the community, for example, by representing the school in local team sports, taking part in community events and raising money for charities. Because pupils enjoy school, the vast majority behave well and relationships are good. Pupils are building a sound foundation for later life and their future economic well-being. Attendance is improving but remains below average despite good work by staff.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving quickly as a result of training, support and the appointment of skilled teachers. During the inspection the great majority of lessons were good, some were outstanding and some were satisfactory. However, teaching in Reception is unsatisfactory because the assessment information is not used efficiently to ensure the

children's work builds effectively on their previous learning. Well-trained learning support assistants make a particularly effective contribution to pupils' learning through the school. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that pupils enjoy their lessons. For example one pupil said, 'The work is a bit hard but we like a challenge.' This helps them to make clear progress as they move through the school. In the best lessons teachers ask questions skilfully to extend pupils' thinking and to check their understanding. Relationships within the classrooms are good and this helps to encourage pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Teacher's marking is regular and encouraging but does not consistently inform pupils how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some stronger features. In the Nursery, for example it is very good and as a result children get off to a flying start and make rapid progress. It is not so effective in Reception because assessment is not used accurately to inform planning. In Key Stages 1 and 2 there is a suitable emphasis on the basic skills of English and mathematics, and teachers readily embrace new ideas to improve the provision. These include the teaching of French with the good support of the neighbouring secondary school. Teachers are now working hard on making better links between subjects in order to make learning more interesting, and on improving the provision for pupils with particular skills and other talents. Other activities, including a variety of visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs, add to the range and richness of experiences provided. Good provision is made for the different needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good support, care and guidance given to pupils help them to develop into happy learners who want to do well. Targets in literacy and numeracy ensure that they understand what they have achieved, and what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them and say, 'Targets help to encourage you to achieve as well as you can'. Much of this work is newly established and although it is helping to raise achievement, its full effect has not yet been seen in test results. Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they have a problem. Those who find learning challenging are well supported by class teachers and teaching assistants whose expertise helps pupils overcome their difficulties. Particularly good support is given to pupils and their families by the learning mentor and family liaison support worker. This has helped to improve attendance, punctuality and pupils' attitudes to school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Staff know the pupils very well and are quick to identify any who are failing to thrive. Additional expertise is sought, when necessary, to support these pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Whilst the school's leadership and management are satisfactory overall there are encouraging signs that they are beginning to have a positive impact on the provision. The headteacher has worked hard and successfully to develop this new school. Her work has been made harder by high levels of staff turnover, which has necessitated the rebuilding of the school's management team. The present structure of key stage coordinators and subject leaders working with the

headteacher and new deputy is beginning to work well and is leading to much more focused discussion about pupils' progress and the early identification of underachievement. These discussions are being hampered, however, because the ISP initiative is leading to a surfeit of pupil progress data. Whilst parents are regularly canvassed on individual issues such as the school travel plan, they are not asked to evaluate the school's overall performance. As a result, the views of all stakeholders are not represented in the wide-ranging improvement plan. The plan is well written but has too many elements which detract from the school's main priority of raising attainment in English, mathematics and science. Recent appointments to the governing body have strengthened its expertise. Planned improvements in the way governors evaluate school developments will give them more relevant, first-hand information about the effectiveness of the school's provision and its ability to improve further.

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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?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3
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	3
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

June 15 2007

Dear children,

Inspection of Harwich Community Primary School and Nursery, Harwich, Essex, CO12 3NP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting your teachers and seeing you at work in your lessons. It was also good to join you for your water safety assembly and meet some of your parents. We really liked your new school and the interesting displays in the classrooms. A special thank you to the children who talked to us and also to the prefects and members of the school council who showed us round. We know you are very proud of your new school and we, like you, think your school dinners are really good.

Here are the things that we really liked about your school:

- you enjoy coming to school because you like your teachers and the exciting work they plan for you to do
- the standards in your writing, reading and mathematics are improving
- you work hard and get on well together in lessons and at playtimes
- your headteacher is doing a good job and she works really hard to make the school even better for you
- those of you who find work or behaviour difficult get the right sort of help and you use it well
- your teachers and teaching assistants look after you very well and help you do the best you can.

There are some things we have asked the school to do:

- help children in the Reception class to do better in lessons
- ask you and your parents about your views on how well the school is doing
- ask teachers to simplify the way they keep records on how good your work is
- concentrate on the things which will help you improve your work even more.

We hope you all do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Matthews Lead inspector