



Harlowbury Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115056
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290115
Inspection dates 23–24 November 2006
Reporting inspector Robert Drew

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Watlington Road
School category	Community		Old Harlow
Age range of pupils	4–11		Essex CM17 0DX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01279 423444
Number on roll (school)	149	Fax number	01279 453202
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr P Waterfield
		Headteacher	Mrs S Lewis-Smith
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. It is situated in Old Harlow but serves a wider area. Pupils enter with broadly average standards overall, though prior attainment varies widely. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN) is average, but there is three times the national average with SEN statements and the school has enhanced provision for speech and language difficulties. The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with very small numbers coming from several ethnic minorities. The headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is improving under the new headteacher, and is currently satisfactory. Since January, with the deputy headteacher, she has successfully promoted better progress, better teaching and learning and improvements in behaviour. Tracking of pupils' progress, while still not fully secure, is also more effective. These factors demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory overall. In English and mathematics, standards are broadly average and pupils make satisfactory progress. The school has in the past fallen well short of its challenging targets in these subjects, but is currently on track to meet those for 2007. In science, current Year 6 pupils have achieved satisfactorily since entering the school, but past results have been too far below national ones for some time. In Key Stage 1, recent tests show a welcome reversal of declining standards and these are now average. Standards in the Foundation Stage are average.

Better monitoring by managers and rising morale amongst staff are helping teaching and learning to improve. They are currently satisfactory, but teaching improvements have not had time to influence standards fully, especially in science. Teachers plan more effectively and liaise well with support assistants. There is good teaching and learning in some areas, such as in Year 6 literacy and numeracy. Pace is strong and expectations high in the best lessons. Teaching lacks consistency in managing pupils' behaviour and setting extension work to challenge the most able.

Systematic monitoring by the headteacher and coordinators is now helping the school to analyse its strengths and weakness. It lacks the capacity to supply detail on key features, such as how lessons match work to pupils' varied needs. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The great majority behave well and positive attitudes prevail, though a minority lack self discipline and can distract others. The school promotes satisfactory spiritual moral, social and cultural development. Many positive initiatives help pupils become aware of how to maintain personal safety and lead healthy lives. The curriculum is satisfactory and the wide range of extra-curricular activities and some good teaching help pupils enjoy their education. They make a satisfactory contribution to the wider community, while School Council and initiatives such as 'play leaders' promote good involvement in school life. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are building a satisfactory basis for pupils' future economic well being. The school cares for pupils, guides them effectively and supports them. However, tracking academic progress towards targets has only recently become adequate and has scope for further improvement.

Leadership and management are satisfactory because they are now raising achievement and ensuring that pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Known weaknesses in standards are being tackled effectively. Tracking and target-setting are beginning to direct teaching and learning adequately. There is a clear direction and a strong sense

of collective purpose. Governors show a good understanding of their school and support senior staff well. Their impact and value for money in the school are both satisfactory.

Although overall effectiveness is satisfactory, performance in science, as reflected in recent standards achieved, has been inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress made in remedying this weakness. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science so that they broadly match national averages for Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that tracking and target-setting are consistently well used by all staff.
- Make monitoring of teaching and learning more rigorous so that its impact is evident.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall standards by Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly average and achievement satisfactory. The school is working hard to improve achievement. Standards in English and mathematics in the current Year 6 are higher and progress better than at the same stage last year. These pupils are in line to meet their targets, due to the use of several new and effective teaching strategies and to a better use of assessment information. Equivalent improvement in science lags behind. Pupils are currently making satisfactory progress in relation to their earlier attainment, but recent science standards were much lower than nationally and data is not used consistently by staff to monitor pupils' progress. Most teachers have adopted new approaches to promote better progress by boys and these are having some impact, especially in English, but the practice is not consistent. Recent improvement in Key Stage 1 tests are further evidence that the school has the capacity to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' overall personal development is satisfactory. For those in the Speech and Language Centre it is good because support is intensive and expectations of appropriate behaviour are particularly clear.

Most pupils behave well, but a few lack awareness of how their actions affect others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are helpful to those with learning difficulties and disabilities and many have special responsibilities. School councillors proudly say, 'It was our idea to have a hut and seats in the playground!' Pupils enjoy finding out more about other cultures and ways of life. Attendance rates have been low for several years but the school has improved its monitoring and lateness has already been reduced significantly. Pupils lead healthy

lives and know how to keep safe. They know adults will listen to their worries and resolve them. Preparation for life beyond school is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving, due to the introduction of systematic monitoring by the headteacher and other managers. Greater staffing stability has been achieved and pupils are learning better with teachers they know well. Support staff and teachers now work together well and this team work was evident in most lessons. When it was matched by clear objectives and strong pace, high-quality teaching resulted, as was seen in several English and mathematics lessons, especially in Year 6. A growing number of pupils know their current standards and how to improve. The school is not yet spreading this good practice in teaching as well as it might because monitoring is at an early stage. Not all lessons match work to the full range of pupils, especially the most able.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, with lessons covering all the required subject areas. The Intensive Support Programme focuses the school well on improving standards in English and mathematics. The Speech and Language Centre provides well for its pupils, because the curriculum is well organised yet flexible to the needs of each individual and the centre is well led.

Personal, social and health education effectively develops pupils' social skills and encourages them to be good members of the school community. While the curriculum is adequately matched to pupils' needs in broad terms, some subjects, in particular science, do not allow sufficient opportunities for 'hands-on' experimentation to enhance their learning, especially important to enthuse and stimulate the boys.

The school provides a good number of clubs, ranging from sports activities to computer and the counselling 'Chat Club.' The residential trip gives a good opportunity to stay away from home and learn through exciting experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Harlowbury is a welcoming school. As one parent says, 'Not once have I ever been in the school and not been greeted by smiling, happy staff'. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and give them good personal support. First aid and medical care are well organised and the school meets requirements for safeguarding children. Those with specific learning disabilities and difficulties are looked after well in their centre and benefit from increased integration

into main school classes. Pupils appreciate collecting merits to show their behaviour is improving. Lunch breaks are not always managed as consistently and effectively as the rest of the day.

Academic guidance for pupils is improving but is still at an early stage of development. The school is only just beginning to collect and analyse useful data so that teachers can plan and teach to ensure the best possible progress of their pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. While there are several improving trends in the school's provision, pupils' achievement has only recently reached adequate levels. The school is sufficiently aware of its strengths and weaknesses and this has allowed the headteacher to have a good initial impact on staffing, morale, stability and team-work. She has made good use of intensive local authority intervention to promote better teaching and subject leadership. Monitoring by leaders and managers has moved rapidly from an extremely low base to reach satisfactory effectiveness, but subject coordinators are only just beginning to become effective supporters and monitors of their colleagues. Tracking and target-setting are now capable of evaluating in broad terms where pupils are and what needs to be done to help them to improve. Governors have a good knowledge of their school, but with the new headteacher, are only now beginning to make a satisfactory impact on standards.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3

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?	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

27 November 2006

Dear Pupils,

Harlowbury Primary School, Old Harlow, Essex, CM17 0DX

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school.

We enjoyed many things about the school:

- Your headteacher is making many things in the school better than they were.
- Pupils in the Speech and Language Centre are becoming much more confident because the centre is well led and managed.
- There is good teaching in some lessons, especially in Year 6.
- Your progress from starting school to leaving in Year 6 is now satisfactory.
- You tell us that you like school and nearly all your parents agree.

If the school is going to improve further it needs to:

- Raise science standards.
- Keep a closer watch on your progress and be sure you can reach your targets.
- Make sure teaching is good in more lessons.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at this school,

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew

Lead Inspector