



Highwood Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117089
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290717
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Joyce Cox

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bushey Mill Lane
School category	Community		Bushey, Watford
Age range of pupils	3–11		Hertfordshire WD2 2AJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01923 226648
Number on roll (school)	422	Fax number	01923 226647
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Dave Annal
		Headteacher	Mrs Poula Budge
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	8–9 November 2006	290717

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this very large primary school the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the percentage who have learning difficulties or disabilities. A below average number has a statement of special educational need. A fifth of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups with around eight per cent who do not speak English as a first language. A very small number of pupils is at an early stage of learning English. There has been a significant turnover in staffing within the last two years, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy. An above average number of pupils join the school other than at the usual starting time. Children start in the Nursery with below average knowledge and skills, particularly in their communication skills.

The school achieved Healthy Schools accreditation in 2003 and an Investor in People award in 2005.

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 and rapidly improving school. Good teaching ensures that all pupils, and in particular those with learning difficulties, achieve well. The children in Nursery and Reception get a good start and most children attain the expected level on entry to Year 1. The Reception outdoor area requires additional resources so that it matches the excellent Nursery outdoor provision. Lively teaching in the infant classes, where learning is made fun, with excellent use of computer technology, results in pupils making good progress and attaining average and improving standards at the end of Year 2. Good teaching and progress continue in the junior classes, where highly skilful planning makes sure that pupils of different abilities receive challenging and interesting work. As a result, Year 6 pupils attain above average standards by the time they leave the school. Staff keep meticulous records of how well pupils are doing, making it easy to track pupils' progress. However, not all staff use the school's effective marking procedures sufficiently well to ensure pupils know how to improve their work.

Parents correctly believe that their children are getting a good education. One writes 'An excellent school which in my opinion is going from strength to strength.' Pupils' personal development is good. Their behaviour is excellent. They flourish and do well in lessons and grow into confident and active learners who enjoy the nourishing school meals and the very good variety of sports available. Pupils are well cared for and say they feel very safe in school and that their views are listened to and acted upon if possible. Older pupils are very involved in all aspects of school life and happily run the reception desk at lunchtimes and support younger children; they also make a real difference to school life by being house captains, prefects and school councillors. All pupils enjoy the interesting and stimulating curriculum and in particular using computers and attending the numerous clubs, visits and special events.

The school provides good value for money. Strong leadership and management have moved the school forward rapidly and the school has an accurate view of its own effectiveness. The school's capacity to improve is good because senior leaders critically examine all aspects of its performance and take the correct actions to improve. This has led to very good improvement since the last inspection in terms of improving standards in handwriting and in the Nursery accommodation and provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that all teachers use marking and target setting consistently to tell pupils how to improve their work.
- Improve the outdoor facilities for children in Reception.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence reveals that the school is being too modest in evaluating pupils' achievement and standards as only satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with

knowledge, skills and understanding which are below those typical for their age. This is particularly true of children's attainment in communication, language and literacy. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and most attain the expected levels on entry to Year 1. Year 1 and 2 pupils continue to achieve well and attain average standards. Standards improved considerably in 2006 and were above average in reading and mathematics. Pupils achieve well in Year 3 to 6 and standards over the last five years have been above average in English and mathematics and high in science by Year 6. Pupils do so well in science because of very good subject leadership, accurate assessment and a strong focus on pupils' investigative skills. The school sets challenging targets which are normally met in national tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their behaviour is outstanding, and they have excellent attitudes to their work. Pupils are courteous and polite, and they really enjoy school, as shown by their good attendance. Pupils feel safe in school, and one said, 'The teachers protect us.' Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They readily carry out a variety of responsibilities, and the school council has helped initiate many improvements, for example to playground equipment. The school is also involved in the wider community, for example, the choir regularly takes part in local events. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives, and they benefit from the good opportunities provided by the school for exercise. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The school is currently working to raise pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural society in which they live. The school successfully develops in its pupils a range of personal skills such as confidence and independence, as well as high standards in literacy and numeracy. This is preparing them well for their next stage of education, as well as later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with outstanding practice in some classes. Teachers plan thoroughly with specific learning objectives and pupils understand the expectations made of them. Lessons move at a good pace. Pupils are challenged with appropriate work and they build on what they have already learned. Teaching assistants support pupils and small groups well. In the outstanding lessons, the teachers encourage the pupils to evaluate their own work and to plan for themselves what they need to do to improve further. Pupils' behaviour and application to their work are excellent. They are eager to learn, answer questions and share their ideas. Year 6 pupils said, 'I like the way the teachers teach - I think we all try our hardest'. The marking in some classes is exemplary but not all staff follow the school's good marking procedures well enough to enable pupils to know how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is carefully planned, meets pupils' needs and is enjoyed by them. The Nursery and Reception curriculum has been successfully improved. The one area still in need of improvement is the outdoor provision for the children in Reception. In the juniors the teaching of pupils in ability sets for literacy and mathematics enables the challenge in tasks to be closely matched to their needs. This leads to good progress. The school's themed weeks enables work in different subjects to be combined successfully. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do well because they are fully included in lessons and receive effective support when needed. The curriculum is enriched by a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy these greatly and participate in large numbers. A broad range of day and residential visits also extend the curriculum, as do visitors to the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care for its pupils is good. Adults ensure that there is effective pastoral care. For example, pupils are confident that they have an adult to turn to if they are worried. Child protection procedures are good, and staff are alert to signs that any pupil might be distressed or anxious. Staff make sure that pupils work in a safe, secure and clean environment. Safety checks and risk assessments are routinely carried out. Pupils are taught about the importance of healthy living, and they are regularly reminded of the need to take care, for instance when doing physical education. Pupils have targets for improving their work and their progress is monitored and reviewed. However these targets vary in quality, and discussions with pupils suggest that they are not always clear enough about what they need to do to make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Since her arrival just over a year ago the headteacher, working closely with the deputy headteacher, has successfully made many improvements to curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. Senior leaders have been pivotal in ensuring that the school has recovered well from a very difficult period. A good programme has been implemented to check and improve teaching and learning which has led to improved standards in Year 2 pupils' reading and mathematics. Senior leaders have also made significant strides forward in involving all staff more fully in school improvement. Owing to staff changes some coordinators are very new to their role but have very clear guidance and play an increasing role in raising standards and achievement. Almost all parents speak highly of the school and feel that it is well led and managed. A small minority feel strongly that communication with senior leaders could be improved. Governors provide a good level of support and an increasing level of challenge. The headteacher's commitment and purposeful leadership has successfully

moved the school forward rapidly. Therefore the school shows a good capacity to improve further.

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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?	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.

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Highwood Primary School, Bushey Mill Lane, Bushey, Hertfordshire, WD23 2AW

Thank you so much for making our visit so enjoyable and for taking time to talk to us and answer all our questions. We thought that you would like to hear what we found out about your school.

There are many really good things happening in your school:

- All of you make good progress and reach good standards by the time you leave.
- You love school because teachers, teaching assistants, visitors and special events make learning extremely interesting.
- You get on very well with one another and your behaviour is excellent.
- Your teachers and other adults help you when you have problems and make sure that you are safe.
- Mrs Budge is a very good headteacher and together with all the staff makes sure that you are happy and successful at school.

You are very fortunate to go to such a good school and your headteacher and deputy headteacher know exactly what could make your school even better. We agree with their views and think that it would also be really great if all the teachers made it very clear to you how you can make your work even better. We also think it would be good if the Reception outdoor area for the children was as interesting and exciting as the one in the Nursery.

It was so good to find that all of you are very happy at school and doing so well and that your parents appreciate and value your school so highly.

Keep working hard and enjoying life at Highwood.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Joyce Cox

(Lead Inspector)