



High Beeches Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117342
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290802
Inspection date 11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Aldwickbury Crescent
School category	Community		Harpenden
Age range of pupils	5-11		Hertfordshire AL5 5SD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582767966
Number on roll (school)	193	Fax number	01582620360
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Carol Senior
		Headteacher	Mrs Paula Harris
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors over one day.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school situated in a suburb of Harpenden. Most pupils are White British, and a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. Very few are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Quality Mark, Investors in People, School Achievement award, Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark and the Activemark Gold award for sport.

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 offering good quality education and outstanding care for its pupils. Continuous improvement and the personal well-being of its pupils lie at the heart of the school's aims. The school's self evaluation is robust, accurate and based on good evidence to support its views. The school is an inclusive and orderly community where care and respect for each other is the norm. It is, deservedly, well regarded locally. There are many very positive comments on the work of the school in parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire. The school is praised for providing a 'well managed and a caring environment, that encourages a good sense of community' and where 'the loyalty and dedication of the teaching staff is reflected in the wide range of extra curricular activities'. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are outstanding and their attendance is above average. Pupils are very happy and well behaved. They feel safe in the school and trust staff to deal with their concerns. Their personal development is excellent and their needs and abilities are appropriately catered for through a good curriculum which is enriched by enjoyable activities that sustain their interest. This is evident in lessons, where pupils are attentive, concentrate fully and as a result, achieve well. They also benefit from good teaching. Lessons have a clear structure. There is a good match of activities to suit the needs of all learners and teachers have high expectations for pupils to complete their work to a good standard. There is scope for information and communication technology (ICT) capabilities to be used even more effectively to enhance learning across all subjects. The school has very good systems for the induction of children to the Reception class. In their first weeks of school the Foundation Stage coordinator works hard to settle the pupils in quickly, so that they become confident and are ready to learn. High standards are set right from the beginning by the Foundation Stage coordinator who provides strong leadership and ensures that new children are accurately assessed to establish their starting points. This information is used effectively to carefully plan for their next steps in learning. Consequently, from broadly average attainment on entry, most children attain at or above the expected levels for their age by the end of the year. The school ensures that the pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school. This is because their transition to the next year group is carefully prepared for in advance. In particular, pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities benefit and make excellent progress. In Year 6 pupils' progress rises sharply. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are exceptionally high. Staff systematically collect assessment information to track pupils' progress and pupils who are identified as underachieving are given additional support. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. This position is underpinned by robust measures used by teachers to track pupils' personal and academic progress. However, the lack of opportunity offered to pupils to judge their own progress limits them in their ability to take some responsibility for their own learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils report that teachers always try to help them to improve. This is echoed by parents who are appreciative of the school's work in this respect. Pupils value the programme of personal, social and health education. They know the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods through growing their own herbs and vegetables which they enjoy

using in cookery lessons. Leadership, management and governance of the school are good. This has brought about continuing improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher provides strong, dynamic leadership and, with the support of her management team, gives the school clear direction. Through increasingly effective monitoring procedures, the senior managers and coordinators have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although information is widely shared, outcomes of the monitoring of lessons are not used routinely to help teachers learn from each other and improve their own performance. The leadership and management provide the school with good capacity to improve. Given the good provision and outcomes, the school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning even further by ensuring that outcomes of the monitoring of lessons are used to identify and spread best practice. - Increase pupils self reliance by providing opportunities for them to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing. - Extend pupils' use of computers in all subjects across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards by Year 6 are exceptionally high and have remained so for several years. From the time they start in Reception, pupils make consistently good progress. In Key Stage 1 attainment is above the national average in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2 pupils' rate of progress continues to improve. As a result, the number of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher level 5 in their national tests is above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Throughout their time at the school, pupils make outstanding progress in developing the personal skills and attributes which help them develop into thoughtful and mature young people. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and promote the health and fitness of others. They thoroughly enjoy their education and appreciate the excellent opportunities they have to learn from, and with, others in the school community and beyond. As they mature they take responsibility for others through the school council, acting as 'buddies' to younger children, growing their own vegetables and raising money for charity. Many of these experiences develop their personal, social and moral skills well. The school is continuing to develop the spiritual and cultural elements within the curriculum and the whole school. By the time they leave the school, pupils have excellent basic and personal skills which equip them well for their next phase of education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good which leads to pupils making good progress. Lessons are well structured and purposeful. Learning is carefully planned and pupils work hard. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to capture the interest of learners. Marking of written work clearly tells pupils if they have achieved all that they should. However, pupils are not always given the opportunity to evaluate for themselves how well they are doing. The teaching assistants support pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities skilfully and unobtrusively so that they make excellent progress. Pupils' work is very well presented and the quality of handwriting is generally good because of the pride they take in their written work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall. There is a wide variety of interesting and engaging activities that ensure pupils experience all that they should. There is the right balance of well planned purposeful activities led by staff and those that pupils choose for themselves. However, this does not always extend to pupils' use of computers in all subjects across the curriculum. Provision is good for both indoor and outdoor pursuits. Activities skilfully build on what pupils know and can do.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils have confidence in staff in resolving any problems they may have. Annual training and retraining of staff and governors in child protection is in place. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 capably support younger ones in Reception and Year 1 in reading and in helping them with any problems they may have. The tracking of pupils' progress is thorough, and useful support is provided to those identified as underachieving. Support for vulnerable pupils is very good with very effective links to outside agencies. Many parents wrote complimentary remarks in the inspection questionnaire showing appreciation for the good level of support and care their children have received from the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very strong leadership. She is able to express her clear vision for the school, and provides the school with clear direction. As a result, the school delivers very high standards. There is a very strong focus on raising achievement and expectations. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not always evaluative

enough to identify and spread the best practice that is evident in the school. Staff and governors share the school's commitment to do the very best for all its pupils.

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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?	1
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	1
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	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1

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	1
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

12 October 2006 Dear Pupils High Beeches Primary School, Aldwickbury Crescent, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 5SD Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed talking to you and your teachers. These are the things that I think are best about your school - You made me very welcome and I thought you were extremely polite and helpful. - You thoroughly enjoy coming to school because you really like your teachers and being with your many friends. - Your teachers, the headteacher and all the other adults in school work very hard to make sure that you are safe and that you enjoy lessons and do really well with your work. - You all get on very well and help each other. - You are good learners, work hard and behave very well. - Older pupils support the younger ones through the buddy system really well. - Every year that you are at the school, you make good progress because you are taught well and prepared in advance for what lies ahead. - The school council represents your views well. This is what I have asked your headteacher and staff to do now to make the school even better - Share the best practice in teaching and learning between teachers. - Increase the opportunities for you to check for yourself how well you are doing. - Make sure that you are able to use computers in all of your subjects Like you, I think you are very lucky to be at your school and that you have lots of opportunities to do exciting things in your lessons and after school. You can help your school to improve by continuing to work as hard as you are doing. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly. I wish you all the very best for the future. Yours sincerely Rashida Sharif (HMI)