

Heron Way Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125887
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	293392
Inspection date	9 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Stephen Parker

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	
School	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pamela Tranter
Headteacher	Carol Hatfield
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2001
School address	Heron Way Horsham RH13 6DJ
Telephone number	01403 261944
Fax number	01403 262369

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school, with pupils coming mainly from privately owned housing in the immediate area. Standards on entry are above average. Numbers of pupils qualifying for free school meals are well below average. The numbers from ethnic minority backgrounds or learning English as an additional language are much lower than average. Fewer pupils than generally found have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has won the Dyslexia Friendly award and a gold award for its work on Developmental Co-ordination Disorders.

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, with outstanding features. Standards have remained well above average in English, mathematics and science since the previous inspection. Performance in mathematics is particularly strong, with exceptionally high results in the Year 6 tests in 2006. Standards in English are rising to a similar level this year as a result of the school's determined efforts. The curriculum is good and extended well through practical activities, special events and after-class activities. Stimulating provision for the arts leads to some outstanding creative writing and artwork. As a result, pupils enjoy school and are proud of it. They make good progress in their personal development. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They work hard and achieve well in Years 1 to 6.

Teaching is good, with some excellent features. Teachers' high expectations have a strong impact on standards. Lessons are well planned with clear purposes. Good teamwork between teachers and other adults ensures that pupils of all abilities are helped to do their best. The quality of care, guidance and support is good. High priority is given to pupils' well-being so that they feel safe and well cared for. The support given to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding because of the specialist expertise of key staff.

Standards and provision in the Reception year are satisfactory, although it is a current school priority to improve them. A significant recent change has been to encourage children to take the initiative in choosing from a range of independent activities at the start of each day. However, the skills and knowledge they are expected to gain are not identified clearly enough. By contrast, they make good progress in writing because teaching is well structured and specific skills are developed through interesting topics.

The school has effective ways of assessing pupils' needs, tracking their progress and setting targets for their next steps in English and mathematics in Years 1 to 6. This process has had a good impact, most notably on standards in writing. The school plans to extend this range of effective approaches to other subjects and aspects of its work.

The school is well led and managed. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff recently but this has been managed well through monitoring followed by support where needed. There are good links with other agencies which benefit pupils. The school evaluates its performance rigorously and accurately so that the targets for improvement are based on a good understanding of needs. Governors are fully involved in this process and meet all statutory requirements well. The large majority of parents speak highly of the school's work, although a few feel that not enough account is taken of their views. Given the strong commitment of staff and governors, the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more guidance for children in Reception so that they develop skills systematically when working on their own.
- Extend to other subjects the good methods in place in English and mathematics for showing pupils how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average when children begin school. Their progress in Reception is satisfactory overall and good in some aspects, notably writing. Progress from Years 1 to 6 is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well because they are given intensive help which is carefully focused on their needs. Very few pupils do not achieve the expected level for their age and many reach the higher level. Test results in Years 2 and 6 have been significantly above average since the previous inspection, with exceptionally high results in mathematics in Year 6 last year. School records show similarly high standards this year as a result of well-focused work and extra staffing to reduce class sizes. An emphasis on practical investigations is boosting pupils' interest in science. Year 6 test results in English were lower than in other subjects in the 2006, although still above average. In response, staff have worked imaginatively to develop more exciting approaches to reading and writing, emphasising 'the wow factor'. This is proving successful in raising standards, which are now well above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent and underlie the high standards they achieve. Attendance continues to be well above average. They behave responsibly and safely in lessons and around school. They work well together, particularly with their 'talk partners'. This initiative is successful in giving them the confidence to take an active part in class discussions and try hard in difficult tasks. Their economic understanding is well developed, for instance, through opportunities to take the initiative in charitable fund-raising. They have good work habits and basic skills. The benefits of physical exercise are well understood, although the school agrees that their understanding of healthy lifestyles could be further developed. Pupils willingly take on duties that involve them in the life of the school. Opportunities for older pupils to help those younger with their work at lunchtimes are an outstanding feature. There are plans to set up a school council to involve selected pupils at a higher level in school decision-making.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Teachers' high expectations that pupils are actively involved and that the quality of their work should be high are strong features. Lesson plans are well informed about pupils' prior learning, with clear targets for progress. Pupils' interest is caught and held well through practical activities and stimulating resources. Instruction is brisk and questioning skilful, prompting thoughtful answers. The work set for groups of differing abilities is challenging and teachers and assistants work well as a team to help all to do their best. Marking is used effectively to praise success and identify weaknesses that need more work. The specialisms of staff and visitors are used well to boost standards in French, music and physical education and to benefit pupils with specific needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum and extends it well through activities outside lessons. There is appropriate emphasis on basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT and these are developed well through other subjects. Pupils with specific needs are fully included in activities. The programmes designed to help these pupils are of high quality. Aspects of provision for the arts are outstanding, notably the excellent artwork celebrated in the many vibrant displays through the school. Drama and music performances are praised by parents. Educational visits, activity days and involvement in sports and arts events extend learning well through first-hand experiences. Out-of-school clubs are popular and cover a good range of interests. The curriculum for Reception children is satisfactory and is a school priority for development. Children are now given frequent opportunities to choose for themselves from a range of interesting activities. This encourages their independence but what they are expected to learn from their experiences is not defined clearly enough.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff know their pupils well and encourage them to do their best. Child protection procedures are well understood and safeguarding meets requirements. Pupils say that there is no bullying and they feel safe. The support given to pupils with specific learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding. Their needs are identified early and closely monitored so that specialist help is given promptly. The school has put in place detailed systems for checking pupils' progress in English and mathematics. This is proving highly effective in identifying individual needs and the next steps in learning. Pupils are also involved in assessing their own progress and have a good understanding of how to improve, for instance, the quality of their writing. The school recognises that these effective methods need to be used in other subjects to ensure that pupils make their best progress. The school also lacks the means of measuring precisely the impact on learning of its proposed changes in the Reception year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has a strong sense of purpose and sets an excellent example in her high aspirations for the school's performance. A new management structure has been shrewdly planned to give senior staff key responsibilities across the school. They are making good progress in leading significant developments in such aspects as provision in the Reception year. Some subject leaders are new to their role but all are working effectively to check provision and standards across the school. Resources are used well, including some excellent applications of ICT for teaching, planning and administration. The school gives good value for money. Governance is good and statutory requirements are met. Governors are well informed through close contact with the school. They are fully involved in strategic planning and have worked successfully with senior management to lead the school through recent staffing difficulties. The school sets challenging academic targets and consistently meets or exceeds them. The shared purpose and drive of staff and governors ensure continuing high standards while giving high priority to the well-being and inclusion of all pupils.

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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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Heron Way Primary School, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 6DJ

As you know, I visited your school recently. Thank you very much for being so polite and friendly. Some of you gave up your lunchtime to talk to me, so a special thanks goes to you. You said that you enjoy school very much and want to learn. I think that is an important reason why you do so well. I saw that you try hard and keep at it even when the work is difficult. I was very impressed with your results. You are very good at maths and write excellent stories. The displays of your work around school have the 'wow factor' and you have good reason to be proud of what you do.

I think that yours is a good school. To make it even better I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to improve these things:

- To make sure that children in Reception know exactly what they need to learn when they work on their own.
- To show you how to get better at other subjects by using the good methods they already have in English and mathematics.

I hope you keep enjoying school and do well in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Parker Lead Inspector