



Harborne Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132261
Local Authority Birmingham
Inspection number 294006
Inspection date 15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Hodgkinson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Station Road
School category	Community		Harborne
Age range of pupils	4-11		Birmingham B17 9LU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4642705
Number on roll (school)	631	Fax number	0121 4642546
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Christine Tobias
		Headteacher	Yvonne Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Founded in 2000 through a merger of the former infant and junior schools, Harborne is a very large primary school. It is popular and oversubscribed, and its Edwardian site is rather cramped for the number of pupils it accommodates. It serves a very socially and ethnically diverse community, but social and economic conditions in the area are generally favourable. About half of the pupils are from minority ethnic heritages; around a quarter speak English as an additional language, although only a small number are beginners in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average overall but has been rising significantly. In Year 3, for example, around a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities.

The school manages an after-school club on-site which has been inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Harborne is a good school. It offers a well-rounded education to its pupils, through which they develop exceptionally well as independent young citizens. A good curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of activities. This helps pupils to develop a very broad understanding of the world and equip them exceptionally well with the skills of initiative, leadership and team-working which are so important for later life. The school encourages pupils to celebrate the rich cultural heritages of their community, and promotes strong relationships between pupils of all backgrounds. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils love coming to school, and their attendance rates are high. They much enjoy their lessons and the good teaching they receive. Their excellent behaviour, and the care shown by the staff, help to keep pupils safe and healthy in spite of the cramped conditions presented by the school's site and premises.

Pupils achieve well. Standards are above average by the time they leave in Year 6. Pupils do particularly well in science as a result of effective teaching supported by a good range of resources. Pupils make good progress in English overall but boys' progress in writing is a relative weakness. The school has made a satisfactory start to addressing this problem through changes to the curriculum which set writing in more interesting contexts, and through the use of better assessment systems. Teachers are using the new 'Quality Marking' system very effectively to keep pupils aware of their writing targets and to show them clearly how to improve their work to meet those targets. In the Foundation Stage (Reception classes), pupils make a good start. A well planned Foundation Stage curriculum ensures that children make strong progress in literacy and numeracy skills through a good balance of structured and independent activities. Constraints on classroom and outdoor play space do, however, restrict children's opportunities for physical and social development.

The school is well led and managed, and parents are highly satisfied with the education it provides. It is guided very effectively by the headteacher's vision for maintaining high standards while preparing young people thoroughly for the future. In carrying through this vision the school has developed excellent links with external organisations to support the learning and welfare of pupils. The development of a faculty system has given staff as middle leaders a much more effective role in monitoring, evaluating and improving performance in their subjects since the last inspection. However, systems for tracking pupils' progress over time do not show clearly enough where pupils are underperforming. Nor do they allow ready and regular analysis of variations in subject performance to allow faculty teams to respond quickly when dips in progress occur. The progress of individual pupils with specific needs is, however, monitored closely. Pupils with learning difficulties therefore achieve well, and some make excellent progress. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of boys' writing.

- Develop tracking systems which allow ready and regular analysis of where pupils and subjects may be underperforming.
- Improve outdoor learning facilities for reception children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' standards on joining the Reception classes vary year on year but are generally above the levels expected for their age. During the Reception Year pupils make good progress, especially in literacy and mathematical development. The gap between pupils' attainment and the national average generally widens positively as pupils get older, and standards are above average in all subjects by Year 6. Standards in Year 2 fell to average for the first time in 2006, but this reflected the atypically high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties in that year group. There is convincing evidence in pupils' books and school records that standards in the current Year 2 are again above average.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well overall. Between Years 2 and 6 their progress is among the best quarter of schools nationally. Progress is particularly good in science. In English boys' writing is a relative weakness. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress overall. In 2005 those requiring support beyond that given solely by the school recorded exceptionally good Year 6 national test results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils respond exceptionally well to the many opportunities they are given to show initiative and to make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. They take their responsibilities very seriously, and know that their contributions, for example to the school council and Play Squad, help the school to run smoothly. Older pupils show exceptional maturity in organising clubs for younger pupils, confidently enlisting staff as supervisors and resolving logistical problems. The exercise of such responsibilities, along with their good development of literacy, numeracy and computer skills, gives pupils excellent preparation for later life. Pupils' excellent behaviour helps the school function very well in spite of some severe constraints on classroom and playground space. Pupils feel very safe and confident that they can turn to members of staff or other pupils if they have problems. Relationships throughout the school community are very strong, and founded strongly on mutual respect and understanding. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live and eat healthily, and participate enthusiastically in a rich programme of physical activity, although the lack of field and playground space restricts opportunities for informal games.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers organise their classes carefully, planning activities that are mostly well matched to pupils' abilities. Lessons are conducted at a good pace, and pupils enjoy their purposeful activities. Targets are being used to increasingly good effect to help pupils measure their own attainment and check their own progress so that they can see clearly how they are improving. The school's Quality Marking system is well used by teachers to show pupils how successful their written work has been in achieving their targets and to give further advice on improvement. This is clearly having a positive effect in improving spelling, punctuation, presentation and grammar, and on other technical aspects of pupils' writing. However, teachers do not always follow up their detailed marking sufficiently rigorously during lessons to ensure that all pupils take enough action to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and well balanced. An excellent range of enrichment activities serves to promote pupils' outstanding personal development. One parent represented the views of many in writing that her son 'loves school and enjoys all the things Harborne has to offer, such as the choir and school trips, and the experience of an American exchange teacher who is still in e-mail contact.' Pupils work exceptionally well with many businesses and organisations in the local community to develop and apply their knowledge across a range of subjects. Arts residential visits, along with many opportunities for pupils to perform in dance, music and drama events, are features of the strong cultural component of the curriculum. The school has recognised the need to provide more stimulating contexts through which boys' writing skills can be developed. A new thematic approach to the organisation of aspects of the curriculum offers pupils good opportunities to write in a variety of forms, and the school is rightly seeking to extend this. In the Reception classes, the careful planning of the curriculum around engaging themes develops pupils' literacy and numeracy skills particularly well, but limited classroom space and outdoor play facilities restrict opportunities to promote pupils' social and physical development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are taught to 'think safe' in a caring school which has a high regard for pupils' welfare. The special educational needs coordinators monitor the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities very closely, and these pupils are very well supported to make good and in some cases excellent progress. The school's tracking system does not, however, show the relative progress of all pupils against their targets with sufficient clarity to readily show where intervention may be necessary. Nonetheless,

when the performance of groups or individuals is identified as needing a boost, the school is able to deploy staff flexibly to intervene. Teachers work very effectively with teaching assistants to plan support for pupils most in need. Booster groups have been very successful in raising standards in science.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is guided by a very clear set of aims centred on sustaining high achievement, maintaining a positive ethos, and developing its pupils as well-rounded young citizens. The headteacher and senior team carry forward these aims rigorously in their accurate monitoring and evaluating of school performance and in planning for improvement. They have high expectations, and have a good track record in addressing identified weaknesses in school performance. The creation of faculty teams of teachers has improved the role that subject leaders play in monitoring performance, and has contributed to significant improvements in teachers' planning and use of assessment. The school therefore has a good capacity to improve. However, the organisation of the information about pupils' progress against targets in their subjects does not allow managers easily to analyse variations in subject performance as they occur. Action to correct performance has therefore sometimes been delayed until after major tests have revealed weaknesses. The school benefits from good and well organised governance which offers support for and careful scrutiny of its work.

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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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	2
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?	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

Thank you for the welcome you gave me when I visited the school for its recent inspection. I very much enjoyed talking with you and finding out how much you enjoy being at school and getting involved in all of its activities. It was good to see how much respect you have for each other and for your teachers. Your excellent behaviour helps the school to run very well despite the limited space in some areas. The school takes good care of you, and you take good care of each other.

Like you, I think that Harborne is a good school. The headteacher and senior team lead the school well, and expect high standards from you. The school prepares you really well for the future, by helping you to reach good standards, make good progress in your work, and by encouraging you to take many responsibilities for organising activities. It offers you a good curriculum and lots of opportunities to work with businesses and other organisations in the community, so that you develop a good understanding of the world. I was very impressed by the performances I heard in music and saw in the film of your arts residential visit.

You enjoy your lessons because you are taught well. You are making good use of the targets teachers set for you and the comments they make on your work to help you improve.

There are some ways in which the school can get even better. Firstly, boys' writing can be improved, because boys do not do as well in writing as they do in other subjects. The school is making some changes to help boys improve their writing, and the boys themselves can help by following their teachers' advice on how to make their writing better. Secondly, I have asked the school's managers to improve the information they have about the progress you are making in reaching your targets, so that they can sort out any problems earlier. Thirdly, the Reception children in particular would benefit from better outdoor learning facilities.

Best wishes for the future.