

Harlesden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101499
Local Authority	Brent
Inspection number	307710
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Norma Ball

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Narinder Nathan
Headteacher	Ms Linda Perrier
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Acton Lane London NW10 8UT
Telephone number	02089657445
Fax number	02089631828

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harlesden Primary is similar in size to most primary schools. It is located in an ethnically and socially diverse area of north west London. Pupils are drawn from some areas with high levels of deprivation and this is reflected in the fact that about half of all pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. This is a very high proportion compared to the national picture. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is extremely high. Over three fifths of pupils require support in learning to speak English when they arrive at the school. A total of 23 languages are spoken and the most common are Somali, Arabic and Urdu. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult is much higher than average and include pupils who have specific and multiple learning needs, autistic spectrum disorders as well as speech and behavioural needs. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is below the national average. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school at different times. The school holds Activemark, Sportsmark and Quality Mark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Harlesden Primary is a happy, inclusive school. The school is well led and managed. Staff care well for pupils, assure their safety and welfare and promote their personal development effectively. When interviewed pupils were very positive about their school and said, 'It's a happy place where we learn lots because teachers make work interesting'. A large majority of parents held similar positive views about the school.

From a below average starting point pupils make good progress because they are well taught and given good support to enhance their learning. As a result, they enjoy lessons and participate with enthusiasm. By the end of Year 6, standards are in line with national expectations in English and mathematics but below average in science. To improve the attainment in science the school is focusing on broadening the pupils' scientific vocabulary and understanding of how to conduct experiments. This initiative requires further work to be effective. Staff make good use of performance data to track pupils' progress and quickly identify underachievement. They are increasingly confident in using a range of assessment data to plan lessons with clear learning objectives. However, planning does not consistently match the pupils' tasks to their abilities and in particular pupils of higher ability are not always challenged to do as well as they can.

Pupils enjoy school and feel secure and confident in the adults who look after them. Because of good pastoral work, pupils behave well and contribute enthusiastically to their school community. They have a clear understanding of how to be safe and healthy. Pupils value and respect each other because their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. Through their developing confidence, good social skills, hard work and attainment they are well equipped for the next stage of their education. All pupils receive good care, support and guidance especially those who need extra help with their learning. Pupils value the guidance of targets set in English and mathematics to set the next steps in their learning and targets are used well in all classes. The quality of day-to-day marking, however, whilst satisfactory, does not always help them identify how to improve their work.

The curriculum meets pupils' learning needs soundly. Links between subjects to make lessons more interesting and strengthen the development of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are inadequately developed. The school is also aware of the need to broaden learning beyond the classroom to enrich pupils' experiences and provide more stimulation and bring learning alive.

The headteacher provides good leadership. She has established a culture of improvement in the school with a clear focus on teaching and learning. Prudent financial management underpins all areas of school improvement and so the school provides good value for money. Governors know the school well and provide support and challenge in equal measure. The school has addressed the issues identified in the last report. School leaders are not complacent and there is a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well led and staff work as an effective team to create a caring and happy learning environment. Children start nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding, which are well below those expected for their age. They are taught well and, by the time they reach Year 1, their standards have improved but remain below expectations in language and

literacy and mathematical development. Children make good progress because activities in the classrooms and in the outdoor areas are stimulating. A good balance of teacher led and children's independent chosen activities provide valuable opportunities to develop independent learning skills. However, some opportunities for extending learning, such as developing children's speaking and vocabulary skills, are missed, particularly for those children who are learning English as an additional language. Staff do not consistently encourage children's literacy skills by modelling language so that they learn how to speak in sentences. Valuable links with parents, beginning with home visits, help children to settle quickly, become familiar with the routines and develop confidence. The curriculum provision both indoors and outdoors for Nursery and Reception classes is outstanding and this gives young children a very good start to their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in science in Key Stage 2, particularly in relation to the teaching of scientific enquiry skills and the understanding of scientific language.
- Improve the curriculum so that it includes better links between subjects and increases the opportunities for pupils to extend their learning beyond the classroom.
- Ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities, especially higher attaining pupils, in all lessons by sharing existing good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in their time in the school. Though standards at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated, they remain broadly in line with the national picture, with the exception of science where they are below average. The school has rightly identified the need to improve pupils' skills in scientific investigations and the use of scientific vocabulary. Pupils are beginning to get better at using scientific language but standards in the recording of the results of experiments and drawing scientific conclusions are still too low. Pupils who require additional help with their learning, including those with specific learning needs, autistic spectrum disorders and speech and behavioural needs, receive a range of sensitive, well-planned support and they make good progress. The school copes well with the challenges arising from pupil mobility by integrating pupils sensitively and ensuring they receive the support they need.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good behaviour and good relationships foster a productive learning environment throughout the school. Pupils enjoy their work and want to learn so the majority attend regularly and punctually. Poor attendance is quickly followed up but a few families resist the efforts of staff to encourage better attendance of their children. Lunch and break times are enjoyable occasions and bullying and name-calling are rare. Pupils mix well in lessons and at play. They have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures both within their own school community and beyond. Pupils join in a limited number of local initiatives and the school is seeking ways to improve community involvement. The views of pupils are sought regularly and valued. For example, the school councillors have contributed to important discussions on behaviour and healthy food at lunchtime. The pupils accept a good range of responsibilities with pride and older pupils maturely perform important roles, such as acting as play leaders at lunch times.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a good learning atmosphere in all classes. Pupils enjoy discussions, respond to questions confidently and work with enthusiasm alone or in small groups. Most lessons have a variety of tasks so pupils remain attentive and involved in their work. Teachers are rapidly improving their skills at using assessment information to monitor pupils' progress. This helps to identify speedily those at risk of falling behind and to deploy effective support. However, the use of assessment information to plan work to meet the needs of different ability groups is not consistent in all classes. In some classes, more able pupils are expected to do more of the same work rather than having tasks set for them to extend their learning. Learning support assistants are well trained and work in a strong partnership with teachers. They provide good support for pupils who need additional help with their learning or are at the early stages of speaking English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum includes activities that reflect pupils' diverse backgrounds and religions well. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills and French has been introduced into the curriculum. The use of ICT, literacy and numeracy in other subjects and the linking of subjects across the curriculum to make learning more interesting is developing but lacks consistency. The school involves parents well including providing good guidance on areas of the curriculum so that they can help their children at home. Good planning for personal, social and health education ensures that pupils respect and care for each other and understand the importance of fitness and well-being. The school makes satisfactory use of visits, visitors and local amenities. It provides little opportunity for the pupils to explore the rich cultural and historical venues available around London, however. The school has a limited number of extra-curricular clubs and recognises that this area requires further development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff give the care and safety of pupils a high priority and the induction of new pupils is sensitively and efficiently organised at whatever stage they join the school. Their needs are addressed well and effective support is put in place where required. This is especially valuable for those entering school in Years 3 to 6, a number of whom require support in learning English or find learning difficult. Careful support helps them acquire quickly the skills and knowledge to achieve as well as their classmates. Targets in literacy and numeracy are well used in all classes to help pupils identify the things they need to learn next. Pupils discuss their targets with teachers and say they find them helpful. Targets have been used to good effect in improving achievement for boys, especially in Key Stage 2. Pupils' work is marked regularly; however, this does not always identify clearly how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management have resulted in a school with a strong ethos within which pupils develop well personally and academically. The headteacher has a clear view of the school and has united staff in her drive to promote improvement and raise standards further. The deputy head and subject leaders are enthusiastic and work in a strong partnership with the headteacher. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and analysis of performance data is thorough. The areas identified in the school development plan are clear and pertinent, such as improving achievement and standards in science. They do not identify the order in which to tackle them, however. The governing body is well led, challenging when necessary, and fully supportive of the school's development as shown by their close monitoring of achievement and standards and their determination to improve the school premises. An efficient committee structure underpins their work. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and so ask searching questions and hold the school to good account.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

22 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harlesden Primary School, London, NW10 8UT

You may remember that two inspectors visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you, your teachers and other people who work in the school. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming because you made our visit very enjoyable.

Your school gives you a good standard of education. One of the best things about Harlesden Primary is it is a very happy place where you enjoy your lessons and get on well with each other. You behave well and work and play together happily. We also learnt that you like to help your school and some of you take responsibilities like being a school councillor or play leader. You know how to stay safe and healthy and enjoy taking lots of exercise.

Your teachers keep a good check on your progress, make most of your lessons interesting and help you to enjoy your learning. In order to make your school even better we have asked that:

- the standards reached in science by older pupils is improved by helping them understand the special vocabulary used and how to carry out and record scientific experiments
- lessons are made even more interesting by including several subjects
- you are given work that is not too easy and not too difficult so you do as well as you can.

Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful to us.

Yours sincerely,

Norma Ball

Lead Inspector