

Harold Wood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102269
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	307951
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Shirley Morris (Acting)
Headteacher	Miss Alison Dowding
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	Recreation Avenue Harold Wood Romford RM3 0TH
Telephone number	01708 345473
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

All parents are given the choice to start their children full-time in the Reception classes in September. Apart from these classes, all other classes are of mixed age. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below that usually found in this slightly above average-sized primary school. While the proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is about the same as in most schools, the number of these pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower. A very small number are at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is a happy place of learning and pupils enjoy school. Their good personal development is demonstrated in positive relationships with one another and in their good levels of concentration and attitudes to work in class. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and how to live healthily. They enjoy taking part in sport. They contribute well to the school community and engage well in local events. Pupils demonstrate a well-developed appreciation of the needs of others.

This is a very caring school. It listens to parents' views and acts upon them. For example, parents reported that they were not always sure what homework pupils had to do. Consequently, staff put in place pupils' personal organisers in which homework activities are explained. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and very appreciative of what it does for their children. They write in praise of 'the staff's commitment', 'the great team spirit', 'the well organised and supported extra-clubs', 'the friendly and family atmosphere' and 'the good management' of the school.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. While provision in the Foundation Stage is good, enabling children to get off to good start, this good progress is not yet consistent across the school. Pupils continue the good progress and obtain above average results overall by Year 2. Progress in the older classes is satisfactory. Achievement in mathematics is lower than in reading and writing because staff's skills in teaching mathematics are not as secure as in English. By Year 6, although standards are above average in English, they are only average in mathematics and science. Pupils' investigative skills and application of their knowledge are weaker aspects in these subjects. Girls have lacked confidence at times in their learning and this was shown in their poorer results compared to boys in Years 2 and 6 in 2007. There are now signs that they are doing better because staff are aware of the issue and drawing girls into discussion more effectively in class. Pupils acquire a satisfactory level of academic competence in preparation for their future education.

Classrooms are neat, orderly and well presented. Pupils' work is displayed to good effect and demonstrates a good attention to different subjects. Staff provide an attractive learning environment. However, the external provision for children in the Reception classes is too small and limits the quality of their outdoor learning experiences. In the school as a whole, while some lessons are good, teaching, overall, is satisfactory because it has not been as effective in mathematics and science. In a minority of classes, there is an over emphasis on using worksheets, which restricts pupils' own thinking skills and independence of thought. Pupils' presentation of their work can be untidy and handwriting is not always of a good enough quality.

Staff are keen to make improvements to raise levels of attainment further. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate and honest. Subject leaders' monitoring skills are developing well under the good leadership of the headteacher and deputy. Staff are accurately diagnosing where improvement can take place. Together with an active and involved governing body, which is also keen to see the school develop further, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Overall, children's attainment is slightly below expectations in all areas of learning, particularly in their communication skills, when they enter school. Effective leadership of the Foundation Stage and good teaching enable the children to make good progress. By the end of Reception, the children reach expected levels for their age. Learning opportunities are well planned with a good choice of activities. These help to challenge and promote children's enjoyment in learning through exploration, enquiry and discovery. However, the indoor provision is stronger than that outdoors. Limited outdoor space, despite the staff's best efforts, restricts the children's physical and other learning opportunities. Assessment of children's progress is an outstanding feature of the provision because it is rigorous and helps the planning of the next steps in children's learning. Children are well settled which supports their independence when they choose their own activities. There are good links with parents. The staff work well together as a team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' competence in applying their knowledge and developing their investigative skills in mathematics and science, particularly at Key Stage 2, so that pupils reach a higher standard.
- Ensure that pupils take a greater pride when they record their work and so develop greater accuracy and neatness.
- Enlarge and develop the external area in the Foundation Stage so that it provides a more effective area for learning as an extension to the classroom.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is graded satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils generally make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and often reach above average standards. However, mathematics attainment has been weaker than reading and writing throughout the school and girls have not always attained as well as the boys. Pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 has been satisfactory overall in recent years in reaching broadly average standards. Pupils continue to make good progress and reach above average standards in English. Their progress is weaker in mathematics and science, where standards are average. This is because teachers have greater skills and confidence in teaching English. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have lacked sufficient opportunities to investigate in science and to apply their knowledge in mathematics. Consequently, there has been some underachievement in these two subjects. Girls, in particular, have lacked confidence in mathematics. Predictions for the current year indicate that the school's efforts are beginning to improve pupils' attainment in mathematics. Black African pupils attain well because they show a particular determination and keenness in their studies enabling them to make good progress throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of respect for themselves and for others. They are polite, friendly and courteous. One said, 'You make friends easily here at Harold Wood' and another, 'Everyone is nice to each other.' Pupils are keen on learning and concentrate well in class. They behave very well in and around school. Pupils play amicably and safely together. Their attendance is above average. Pupils have good opportunities to undertake responsibilities. The school council works well to suggest improvements, for example the provision of bike sheds. It raises money for charities, such as for wild life. Pupils leave school as confident and well-rounded individuals. They acquire satisfactory academic skills to support them in the next stage of their education. They know the routines and maturely abide by them, which supports an orderly school. They feel safe and know that they can confidently approach an adult in school about any worry that they may have.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Staff's very good relationships with pupils support a good atmosphere for learning. Teachers prepare and structure lessons well. They use questioning effectively to engage pupils. Teachers share the learning intentions well and ensure pupils understand them. They often explain the features of the learning that will bring success in the lesson. Staff are gaining in confidence in the use of modern technology to present lessons more visually. This use is currently more successful in English, in which they demonstrate a greater teaching confidence overall, than in science and mathematics. Marking is satisfactory and best when teachers engage with pupils in what they have written in English work. It often helps pupils to improve their work. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils set out their work neatly enough in mathematics and English, or that handwriting is of a good enough quality. This sometimes affects accuracy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is well planned for the mixed-age classes, ensuring that it meets requirements. The good arrangements to provide small group work for pupils who find learning difficult in the basic subjects or who are at an early stage of learning English support them well. Currently links between subjects are limited. However, the school is keen to make the curriculum more creative and more relevant to pupils' own lives and experiences. It is working towards this. Subject leaders are supporting other staff to improve the provision in mathematics and science, particularly to assist pupils in applying and extending their knowledge through investigational work. The provision in personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. The extensive opportunities to engage in extra-curricular clubs, such as bird watching, are good feature of the curriculum. Visitors, such as theatre workshops, and visits to places of interest support the curriculum effectively, including residential visits. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good arrangements enable pupils to share any troubles they may have, such as the 'worry box' in each classroom. The school's good links with professional agencies ensure that it receives swift advice for pupils who have specific difficulties. Health and safety procedures are rigorous. Child protection arrangements are very secure. Careful records are maintained of any behavioural incidents. First-aid arrangements are thorough and very good records are maintained of any accidents. Staff check on unreported absences quickly and there are very good arrangements for checking attendance records.

Staff set targets for pupils in English and mathematics enabling them to know the next stage in their learning. The school has recently introduced a more rigorous system to track pupils' progress across the school. This is helping staff to identify more quickly any pupils who are not making expected rates of progress, but it is too early to assess its effectiveness.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together as a team. Together with staff and governors, they have identified the correct priorities for attention and clearly outlined them in the good school development plan. Subject leaders' action plans have become more effective in detailing plans to tackle areas of weakness. However, they do not always specify clearly enough the sequence of steps that need to be taken to successfully complete the objectives. Their past monitoring has often picked out correct aspects for improvement, such as pupils' presentation of their work, but this has not always led to improvements. Staff are becoming more confident as a result of recent initiatives in grading pupils' work accurately. There is also a greater rigour in the monitoring of work. A particularly good innovation is the discussion with pupils about features in their classrooms that assist them in their work. This is helping staff to get to the heart of pupils' learning.

The governing body is supportive. It takes a keen interest in the school's work. Its extra meeting each term with senior staff enables it to keep abreast of different initiatives and to challenge as the school's 'critical friend'. Governors visit the school regularly and several have links with specific subjects and aspects of the school's work, enabling them to gain a keen insight.

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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?	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

30 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harold Wood Primary School, Romford, RM3 0TH

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much. We found you to be very polite and well behaved. You are growing up very well as young people. You make a good contribution to the school's work through the various jobs that you undertake, such as helping in assembly and as members of the school council. You clearly enjoy school. Harold Wood Primary School provides you with a satisfactory education. You work well in lessons but when we looked at your work found that some of you could set out your work more neatly and improve your handwriting. We have asked staff to make sure that you are more aware of this.

Children in the Reception classes make good progress but you do not make consistently good progress throughout the school, especially in Years 3 to 6. This is because you are not given enough opportunities to use your existing knowledge in science and mathematics in order to develop it further through investigations and practical work. As a result, your work in English is of a higher standard throughout the school than in mathematics and science. Girls have not always done as well as the boys, but this is improving. However, we have asked the staff to make sure that you all improve your skills in mathematics and science in the future.

We found that the outside area for the Reception classes is very small. It does not enable the staff to give children things to do outside that are really challenging. We have requested the school to develop this area so it is larger, more exciting and supports children's learning better.

The staff take very good care of you and you attend a happy school where everyone works well together. There is a good sense of teamwork. Your parents are pleased that you attend Harold Wood. We hope that you will continue to work hard and reach your ambitions. Thank you once again for all your help and kindness to us.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth

Lead Inspector