

Harthill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106868
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	309252
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Philip Jarrett HMI

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dale Harris
Headteacher	Mrs Jackie Williams
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
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Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Harthill Primary School is a smaller than average primary school located in a semi-rural area. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average and nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around average although there are currently no pupils who have statements of special needs. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The school has achieved a number of awards including an Advanced Healthy Schools Award, the Active Mark and the Excellence in Enterprise Education Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Harthill Primary School is a good and improving school. This is the result of effective leadership and good teaching. Standards have been average over recent years and the school acknowledges that there is room for improvement. The most recent test results, supported by evidence seen during the inspection, confirm that achievement is now good and that standards are expected to rise further.

Average standards reflect satisfactory progress in the past, except in science where achievement has been too low. Progress over this period appears to have been affected particularly by substantial staff turbulence. However, the school now has a settled team and a different management structure. This is leading to consistently good teaching that is meeting pupils' needs and producing rates of progress that are currently good. This improvement was reflected in the standards achieved by Year 6 pupils in 2007 which rose sharply in all three subjects and showed good achievement in English and mathematics. Pupils currently in the school are making good progress and this confirms the rising trend. Although the school succeeds in getting most pupils to achieve in line with national expectations, the numbers achieving the higher level at the end of Key Stage 2 are below average.

Pupils benefit from an innovative curriculum that captures their interest and motivates them to do well. The curriculum is wide ranging and varied, focusing on aspects as diverse as creativity, enterprise education and provision for two modern foreign languages. This stimulates pupils and has a positive effect on their personal development and attitudes towards learning.

Pupils like coming to school and attendance is above average. They make a good start in the Reception class where there are close links both with pre-school provision and with the Year 1 curriculum. The welcoming and close-knit ethos of the school means that pupils settle quickly and make friends easily. Personal development is good overall and with some significant strengths. Pupils enjoy lessons and want to do well. Good provision for sport helps them to develop healthy lifestyles. Pupils feel safe and secure and know whom they should talk to if problems arise. Behaviour is very good, supported by an emphasis on emotional development within the curriculum. The school council works well and this helps pupils to contribute to decisions within the school. There are very good links with the local community and beyond. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Procedures to track pupils' progress, provide additional support and set suitable targets are particularly strong and this helps pupils know how to improve their work. This has contributed to the recent improvement in achievement.

The school is well led. The headteacher has a clear vision which is reflected in the exciting curriculum and the caring ethos of the school. She works very closely with the governing body which has a good understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. Leadership roles are distributed across several members of staff and this has helped to create a common sense of purpose. The school's leadership is determined that standards should continue to improve and current evidence suggests that this will happen. The school is setting challenging targets to raise standards and these targets were achieved in 2007. The school knows what it needs to do to raise standards further. As a result, its capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provision is well managed and this ensures that children get off to a good start to their learning and personal development. The classroom is attractive and well organised to meet pupils' needs, with an emphasis on practical activities. Good outdoor provision enables pupils to develop their physical skills and contributes to their social development. Teaching is good and provides an effective balance of directed activities and pupil choice which prepares learners well for work in Year 1. As a result, pupils enjoy learning, gain in confidence and play together happily. Assessment is good and this supports learning because teachers keep accurate records and use this information to target support, for example, at younger pupils who need more help to develop speaking and listening skills. There are good links with parents and with the neighbouring pre-school provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science.
- Improve the achievement of the more able pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have been broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2 in recent years although too few pupils have achieved higher than the national average. Pupils have done less well in science than in English or mathematics. The school accepts that pupils are very keen to learn and that standards should be higher. The unvalidated results for 2007 show significant improvements in all subjects, including science.

Standards in reading are better than writing but the gap has closed in the past two years as a result of the school's actions. Overall, girls tend to do better than boys, especially in English. However, the school has recognised this as a priority and boys are now performing better, particularly in writing.

Historically, test results show that the achievement of pupils has been broadly satisfactory. However, achievement has improved and is currently good. This is reflected in the good progress made by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics last year. Progress in lessons observed was also consistently good. In addition, the school's records, based on close and effective tracking of progress, confirm that achievement is on an upward trend, especially in science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, as a result of good monitoring and effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their lessons and this is reflected in good attendance. They are keen to learn and form good relationships with adults and other pupils. They are polite and friendly. They understand what they need to do to keep safe and all pupils feel secure in school. Behaviour is very good and the school encourages pupils to talk openly and to discuss any problems that might arise.

Moral and social development is promoted particularly well and this leads pupils to consider fully the needs of others. Cultural development has improved since the previous inspection

through actions such as the whole school India week and visitors from other cultures. There was limited evidence of the promotion of spiritual development during the inspection. Assemblies, for example, focused on aspects of moral and social development. However, time for reflection is planned into some assemblies and pupils spoke powerfully about the impact of the recent Remembrance Service.

Pupils are very successful in pursuing a healthy lifestyle, based on their knowledge and understanding of the importance of diet and exercise. This is extended by good provision for sport. The well designed playground ensures that pupils pursue a range of healthy outdoor lessons. Pupils take responsibility in, and contribute to, the school and wider community. This is seen through the effective work of the school council and pupils' involvement in local activities including village festivals, fund-raising for national charities and meeting with older members of the community. Pupils develop their enterprise skills well from an early age, for example, recording and marketing a CD of songs and selling Christmas cards they have designed. Improvements in standards generally and the further development of information and communication technology (ICT) will serve to extend pupils' skills for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching observed was good overall. Learning is helped by very positive attitudes from pupils. Good support is given in classrooms to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching is often lively and enthusiastic and it motivates pupils to do well. Lessons have clear learning objectives, shared well with pupils, and in the best lessons pupils' understanding of their progress develops well. Teachers manage learning effectively and appropriate strategies ensure that pupils remain focused on their learning.

Pupils say that teachers make learning fun. Teachers make good use of first hand experiences and interesting topics to engage pupils' interest and this mostly works well. Teachers are increasingly using approaches that stimulate pupils including visual resources, talk partners and well planned practical activities. The relationship between teachers and pupils is strong and this generates a good response.

In the best lessons observed, there was a good pace to learning which helped pupils to progress. In some lessons the more able pupils were not challenged sufficiently and opportunities were missed to make more effective use of teaching assistants, for instance at the start of lessons and in guided group work.

Good assessment of learning means that teachers monitor progress and are aware of pupils' learning needs. The process of setting targets is thorough and systematic and this helps pupils know how to improve their work. This is supported by good marking which provides helpful feedback. This is particularly effective for older pupils who are given time to reflect on the marking and to consider how to make immediate improvements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and some aspects are outstanding. However, some of the initiatives have not yet had sufficient time to make a full impact on standards.

There are several innovative elements to the curriculum. It is firmly based on the need to enthuse pupils, make use of first hand experience and develop creativity. For example, the school makes good use of visits and visitors to stimulate pupils' interest. Whole school and class-based themes are used well to make good links across subjects. The curriculum is further promoted by a well planned enrichment programme that gives pupils experience of a range of creative work, taught by specialists. This serves to have a positive impact on pupils' learning, for instance through standards in art or confidence in speaking and listening.

Pupils are given opportunities to learn both Spanish and French. There is a strong emphasis on sport and healthy living through competitive games, a sports club, two hours of physical education and enrichment activities. Pupils develop a good understanding of workplace skills through enterprise links with the local secondary school, involvement with local businesses and particular work-related projects. The development of ICT skills is less well developed. The curriculum places good emphasis on pupils' social and emotional development with regular opportunities for discussion and reflection. The school also offers a good range of after-school activities, including gardening, cookery and a stamp club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an extremely welcoming school where staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to building strong relationships and promoting personal development. Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils get on very well together and feel safe. Teachers know them well and provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss problems and resolve issues, where they arise. Pupils are trained to be 'Befrienders' and to support others although, as one pupil admitted, 'There's not a lot of need for it here!' Pupils' self-esteem is nurtured very well, through regular celebration assemblies, for example, and as a result they make good progress in their personal development. Good care is taken to ensure that even the youngest children know to turn to an adult if they need help and this makes them confident and happy in school. Safeguarding systems meet national guidelines and risk assessments are robust.

The school has thorough and effective systems for tracking pupils' progress across all subjects. This allows teachers to identify pupils whose progress has stalled or who are not meeting the targets set for them. This leads to well targeted support for individuals, making use of a number of different strategies. The most vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and well supported. The school works very well with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress.

Guidance on learning is especially well developed. Through effective setting of targets, clear learning objectives and good marking, pupils are helped to understand what they need to do to improve their learning. The positive impact of this is evident in improved achievement, for instance in the development of their writing skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall, reflecting recent changes to the leadership team and a more strategic role for the governing body. School self-evaluation is very effective and based on a realistic assessment of strengths and weaknesses. There is a clear recognition that standards could be higher and a determination to do even better. As one governor said, 'We

will have an outstanding school.' The school has accurately identified the most important priorities and put in place effective improvement plans. The school has addressed weaknesses from the previous inspection well and standards are now beginning to rise.

The headteacher provides good leadership. She has a clear sense of direction and knows what sort of school she wants. The innovative curriculum is very much at the centre of this vision. After a period of some staffing instability, the headteacher has been able to create a cohesive team that works well together. She has re-structured the leadership team and delegated some responsibility to other members of staff. This has produced a good, shared sense of purpose.

The school's leaders are rightly focused on raising standards. Challenging targets are being set and this worked well last year where achievement improved significantly. The governing body shares the headteacher's ambitions for the school. It makes a significant contribution to the school's leadership. The arrangement whereby the headteacher meets regularly with the chair and vice chair of governors to discuss and review progress works extremely well. As a result, these key governors are very well informed about the school and have a very good understanding of the issues. The governing body provides committed and thoughtful support together with appropriate challenge. As a result, the school is well placed to make further improvements.

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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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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.

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	1
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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

My colleague, Mr Lord, and I very much enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school on the 14-15 November 2007. We spoke with many of you in lessons and at play-times, as well as meeting groups of pupils and the school council. You were very polite and what you said helped us to understand the school better.

We think that yours is a good school. You all seem to like coming to school and enjoy the lessons. We were especially impressed with your behaviour, which we thought was excellent. You were very friendly and helpful. You all seem to get on well together and, if problems arise, know who to talk to. You are given some good opportunities to contribute to the school and the school council seems to work well. You also have quite a lot of involvement with the village and the local community.

You enjoy learning and are keen to do well. You like lessons, especially when the teachers make them fun. Teaching is good and the school tries hard to find topics and activities that will interest you. We enjoyed seeing the work that you are currently doing on St George and the Dragon. The school offers you quite a rich curriculum. We especially noted the enrichment sessions on Thursday afternoon, all the physical education and games activities, the work on French and Spanish, and the good range of after-school clubs. Most of your parents agree that the school is a good one.

Teachers care for you well. You all said that you feel safe and secure. You have lots of opportunities to discuss your feelings, for instance in the SEAL lessons. The teachers know how well you are doing. They give extra help to those who need it. They also help you to understand how to improve your work by talking about learning (WALT and WILF) and by giving you targets for improvement.

We suggested that the school should try to improve standards in science and help the more academic pupils to do even better.