

Hermitage Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109815
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	310107
Inspection date	24 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Forest
Headteacher	Mrs Peta Collicott
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Hampstead Norreys Road Hermitage Thatcham RG18 9SA
Telephone number	01635 200355
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated how well the school's leaders and managers are improving provision and pupils' progress in writing and mathematics.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, governors and staff also contributed to the judgements.

Description of the school

Hermitage is a smaller than average primary school serving mainly the village of Hermitage. The school has increased in size during the last two years because of housing developments in the village. Accommodation has been extended to provide for the increased pupil numbers. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language but very few are at an early stage of English acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties has increased and is now about average. Their needs include moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A higher than usual proportion of pupils leave or join the school partway through the school year. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Hermitage Primary is satisfactory. There are good aspects to its work. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because of the effective care, guidance and support provided. Children in Reception get off to a good start. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Their progress in these years is uneven because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average.

Leadership and management have had considerable challenges over the past two years with a major building project and an influx of new pupils. Leadership roles and responsibilities have been shared effectively among senior staff. Systems to evaluate the school's performance are satisfactory. The school recognises its strengths and has identified where improvements are needed. However, action to raise achievement in writing and mathematics has not been consistently successful across the school. Programmes to provide for the needs of a changing pupil intake, such as those with English as an additional language and those who need specific support, are relatively new and have yet to have an impact. The governors are supportive and have a realistic view of the school's performance. They are aware of the need to be more challenging about pupils' progress. The school's capacity to improve is currently satisfactory.

Parents' views of the school are mixed. While most are happy with the care and education provided, a significant minority who responded to the questionnaire have concerns about behaviour, inconsistencies in teaching and leadership and management. In particular, parents do not feel that the school takes sufficient account of their concerns. Most pupils behave well but the school does have a few pupils with challenging behaviour. Senior staff and governors recognise the need to build a stronger partnership with some of its parents.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers establish good relationships with their pupils. They make the purpose of the lessons clear so pupils know what they are expected to learn. Pupils are attentive and respond well to their teachers' clear instructions and explanations. Effective questioning by teachers challenges the pupils and checks their understanding. Interactive whiteboards are used well by teachers to illustrate key learning points. When teachers use assessment information effectively, tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, in these lessons, pupils are challenged well and they make good gains in their learning. However, this is not happening in all classes. On occasions, pupils are not suitably challenged and find the work either too hard or too easy. An over reliance on worksheets in Year 2 hinders pupils' ability to plan and organise their own work. These worksheet tasks are not always challenging enough and restrict opportunities for extended writing. Learning support assistants are effectively directed and make a good contribution to learning, particularly for those pupils who need extra help with their work.

Year 2 assessments in 2007 were above average in reading and broadly average in writing and mathematics, which is lower than at the time of the last inspection. While standards are adversely affected by pupils leaving and joining the school, a significant number of pupils in Years 1 and 2 could be making more progress, particularly in writing. National test results for Year 6 in 2007 were above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in the current Year 6 are similar. From their starting points, pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in science and satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. The better progress in science is because of good opportunities for pupils to investigate. Pupils' work shows that they are making better progress in writing in Years 3, 4 and 5.

The curriculum promotes satisfactory academic progress for pupils and makes a good contribution to their personal development. Opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their writing skills in other subjects are improving but the school recognises that there is scope to extend this and also to celebrate pupils' writing more widely. Displays of high quality writing in the school are limited. Opportunities for pupils to apply and develop numeracy skills through investigative work are being increased but this is not consistently implemented in all classes. Provision for art and design is a strength and there are good examples of pupils' work on display. A good range of additional activities including clubs, visits and visitors enriches pupils' learning and adds to their enjoyment. Popular clubs include, dance, football, judo, French, recorders and rugby. For Year 6, a successful week in Wales offers a range of interesting outdoor activities and builds pupils' team building skills. Health and safety education are promoted well across the curriculum. Pupils and staff are pleased with the new and improved school accommodation.

Effective pastoral care and support contribute well to pupils' personal development. Staff know the pupils well and the school's positive climate promotes good relationships. There are good procedures to ensure pupils are protected and safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected by their high attendance levels and enthusiastic participation in activities. Most pupils are well behaved. They are friendly, polite and relate well to others. Pupils work well collaboratively in a range of subjects. They adopt healthy lifestyles and show a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating, exercising regularly and keeping safe. Good contributions are made to the school and wider community. Those on the school council have initiated a prefect system and have contributed to improvements to playground equipment and games. The eco committee promote the importance of recycling and saving energy. At Hermitage, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. By the time they leave, literacy and numeracy standards are above average and their personal and social skills are well developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most year groups enter Reception with knowledge and skills above those expected for their age. Good teaching and a wide range of interesting activities enable children to make good progress in all areas of learning. The teacher and learning support assistants provide an effective blend of adult-led tasks and opportunities for children to explore, be creative and work independently. In Reception, children begin to acquire basic writing skills and there is scope to extend writing provision further. By the end of Reception, children have acquired good levels of knowledge and skills, which prepare them well for the next stage of their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement in writing and the standards they attain by Year 2 by increasing the range of opportunities to use their skills and celebrate their writing more widely.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by ensuring that the school's drive to increase investigative work is consistently implemented.
- Ensure that all lessons are suitably challenging and reduce the use of worksheets.
- Take positive steps to build a stronger partnership with parents and tackle their concerns.

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

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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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
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?	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	3
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	3
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

08 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hermitage Primary School, Thatcham, RG18 9SA

Thank you so much for welcoming me into your school and showing me your work. I enjoyed my visit and would like to tell you about some of the things I found out. Hermitage is a satisfactory school. It has some good features.

These are strengths of the school.

- Children in Reception get off to a good start.
- You thoroughly enjoy school and your attendance is outstanding.
- The school is a caring, friendly and pleasant place to be.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in science.
- Your behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school.
- You show a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and keeping safe.
- A good range of additional activities is provided for you, including clubs, visitors and visits.
- Your artwork on display is of good quality.
- Staff take good care of you and give you good support.

There are four areas that the school should work on to make it even better.

- Improve your progress in writing by increasing the range of writing opportunities and celebrating your success.
- Some of you could make more progress in mathematics by having more opportunities to use and apply your numeracy skills.
- On occasions, your teachers could challenge you more and not use so many worksheets.
- The school should take positive steps to address parents' concerns and suggestions.

You can help by building on your positive attitudes to learning and working hard on using your writing and numeracy skills. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector