

Highworth Combined School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110403
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310289
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Bernice Magson

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	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Ferguson
Headteacher	Mr Graeme Kilner
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Highworth Close High Wycombe HP13 7PH
Telephone number	01494 525 534
Fax number	01494 536 681

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves a diverse social community in High Wycombe. Children join the Nursery in the September that they are three, and continue on a part-time basis in the Reception classes. Full-time education begins during the Spring term of the Reception year. Pupils are from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with Asian pupils the largest minority group. Well above average numbers of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is above average, and includes some pupils with significant hearing impairment. Eleven pupils have a formal statement for their special educational needs. Extended services are provided on site, including out of school care for pupils and adult education programmes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. A very good feature is the high quality of racial harmony and inclusion of all pupils in every aspect of school life. 'Highworth strives hard to achieve an environment where everybody is very well-integrated, regardless of race, religion or income', was a comment reflecting the positive views held by the majority of parents and carers. A committed and enthusiastic team of headteacher, staff and governors promotes an ethos of trust and respect, acting unobtrusively, but very effectively in developing excellent relationships. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and attend school regularly. Those with significant needs, such as hearing impairment or communication and language needs, participate fully with their peers and enjoy all school activities.

Pupils achieve well. From low starting points on entry, most pupils attain average standards by Year 6. The above average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties in each cohort has an impact on overall results in national tests each year. Inspection findings support the school's own assessment, which shows an upward trend in standards by Year 6. The current Year 6 is on course to achieve its predicted targets in national tests, with increased numbers achieving the higher levels in both English, mathematics and science. This is because of the introduction of a additional targeted support and the setting of ability groups. Outstanding help from specialist staff, including teaching assistants and communicators, ensures that pupils with specific needs, such as hearing impairment, achieve as well as their peers.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Many teachers plan a good range of activities, which encourage and stimulate pupils' interest in learning. In a lesson in Year 4, for example, pupils showed an intense interest in calculating the quantities of soft drinks needed later for a party. Some teachers make good use of assessment data and pupils are therefore confident learners, because new skills are built successfully on their prior attainment. However, this process is not consistent across the school, and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low in some lessons. Teachers' marking does not always give guidance for pupils on how to improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory. It has some weaknesses, particularly in Years 3 to 5, where pupils have too few opportunities to write at length or practise their skills of numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects. A more practically based curriculum is helping pupils to improve their skills of investigation. The progress of boys, especially, has accelerated recently because curriculum topics are focused more directly on pupils' needs.

Under the guidance of an excellent headteacher, supported by an effective deputy, the school has developed as a highly inclusive organisation where staff, governors and parents feel valued and their skills are used very effectively to develop the school. A strength is the effective leadership and management of provision for pupils with significant learning needs, including hearing impairment. An enthusiastic team of subject and year group leaders has introduced some good initiatives, which are raising standards. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children in the Foundation Stage love going to school and are eager to learn. Parents are pleased with how well their children have settled and some described how at weekends they

ask, 'Can I go to school today?' This is because the Foundation Stage provides a happy and safe environment in which children feel secure, encouraging them to develop good relationships with adults. As a result, children are making good progress in their social development. In other areas of learning progress is less rapid, because the range and quality of activities in child-initiated play does not always challenge each child sufficiently. Nursery and Reception children share outdoor provision, and plans do not always cater for their varying needs. Teachers and key workers work well with children in adult-led activities and through skilful questioning direct their learning well. Assessment of children's progress is improving. Bilingual help has been increased for those children at an early stage of speaking English. There is excellent support for those children with hearing impairment, and they are progressing well to achieve targets in their individual education plans. Most children make satisfactory progress, but are not yet reaching expected goals for their age by the end of the Reception year, particularly in speaking and listening, knowledge of sounds and letters, and in early writing.

What the school should do to improve further

- In the Foundation Stage, increase the range and quality of learning experiences during child-initiated activities.
- Ensure greater consistency in the use of assessment and marking, so that teachers and pupils know the next steps to take to bring about improvements in learning.
- Provide more opportunities, particularly in Years 3 to 5, for pupils to apply and develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average by the end of Years 2 and 6. Pupils are making good progress overall, as the quality of teaching is good in most classes. The latest national tests results show an improvement in standards by Year 6, with an increased number of pupils attaining the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. The current Year 6 are on course to maintain this upward trend if predicted targets are achieved by the end of the year. However, actions to bring about improvement throughout the school are not fully embedded, such as in the use of assessment data to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. As a result, some pupils are making only satisfactory progress, particularly in Years 3 to 5, because teachers' expectations of them are too low.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say, 'It is interesting and lessons are fun'. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with each other and behave well in the classroom and around the school. Their emotional health is developing well, because staff and community members provide good role models that promote trust and respect. Pupils behave well. They make their own school rules and maintain them extremely well. Members of the school council are justly proud of their contributions to improve the school. However, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is only satisfactory because they have too limited an understanding of wider world issues. Some good use is made of drama in assemblies, which guides pupils to explore their feelings and beliefs. They support a range of charities and care well for those who are vulnerable or less fortunate. Pupils like to make independent choices and decisions, such as choosing options for healthy lifestyles. Already, pupils understand the importance of healthy

eating and regular exercise, and many participate in sporting activities. The importance of personal safety is clearly understood by pupils and the need to take good care of themselves. These personal qualities, along with the good progress they make in basic skills, prepare pupils well for their later life and learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a significant proportion of good teaching across the school, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 6, where progress is more rapid. Most lessons are well planned with good opportunities for pupils to build on what they have learned before. Teachers use approaches such as 'Talking Partners' to encourage pupils to build up their speaking and listening skills, developing their confidence and self-esteem. In the best teaching, a good pace, challenge and high expectations promote effective learning. Pupils are keen to improve, and are highly engaged in their learning. Where teaching is only satisfactory, introductions are too long and there is not enough time for pupils to apply themselves to their activities. Teaching assistants are employed very effectively to support pupils with hearing impairment, learning difficulties and other well-targeted groups in mathematics and English.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

In Years 1, 2 and 6, there are good opportunities to practise literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across subjects, but this practise is not consistent throughout the school. There are an increasing number of practical or real life opportunities for pupils, which enable them to investigate independently or work in groups, particularly in science. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' creative skills, such as in drama or music. A very good range of clubs are provided, which focus very well on the needs of differing pupils, enrich the curriculum, and are popular with pupils. They contribute well to pupils' personal development. Visits and visitors enhance the range of learning opportunities, enabling pupils to benefit from learning about the lives of others and promoting their understanding of citizenship.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall, and pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils feel safe because they know that their concerns are treated with sensitivity and their successes celebrated. Pupils with hearing impairment and other learning difficulties receive outstanding support, both in lessons and activities that are more informal, such as out of school clubs. The school works very closely with outside agencies and their expertise is used extremely well in supporting pupils. Systems to track pupils' progress are recently revised and appropriate targets are set to guide pupils in their next steps in learning. The school has accurately identified a lack of consistency in how teachers use assessment information to plan lessons and measure pupils' progress. Although satisfactory arrangements are in place to share information about pupils' progress with parents, some would like this to be increased, so that they can support their children's learning more effectively. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are fully in place and understood by all adults. The good procedures support pupils' health, safety and

well-being. Links with local schools are successful in promoting a smooth transition from one stage of education to the next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has been successful in sustaining the confidence, trust and respect of pupils and their parents during a period of considerable change in the intake, in staffing and in the governing body. In conjunction with the headteacher, a strong and collegiate team of people are developing the school well and setting challenging targets for improvement. They are keen to ensure that the school's provision caters effectively for the differing needs of pupils and a good range of recent initiatives are starting to prove effective. School finances are managed efficiently. Governors are supportive of the school's efforts to raise standards and they are increasingly involved in the processes of self-evaluation. The school has accurately identified shortcomings in the provision for child-initiated play in the Foundation Stage.

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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	3
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	3
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	3
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

13 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Highworth Combined School and Nursery, High Wycombe, HP13 7PH

You may recall that a team of three inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for making us so welcome. We enjoyed finding out about all the exciting things that you are doing. It was good to see many of you receiving awards at your celebration assembly. Well done! We think that you have a good school. We liked these things about your school:

- your school is like a large family and you care for each other very well
- you are all very polite and well-behaved and you make visitors feel very welcome
- you are enthusiastic learners and participate well in lessons
- teachers work hard to make lessons interesting for you
- all the adults support you very well in your learning
- the school council and healthy schools group are very good at influencing the work of the school
- your headteacher, staff and governors are always looking at how well you are doing and finding new ways to help you improve.

Mr Kilner and the other adults are working hard to make your school even better. We have asked them to do three things, which we think will help. We think that the teachers could make better use of information about how you are doing when they are planning lessons, and letting you know how to improve your work, for example, when they are marking your books. We would like pupils in Years 3 to 5 to have more opportunities to use their skills in reading, writing, number and ICT in other subjects. For the children in the Foundation Stage, we would like to see a greater range of things for you to do.

We hope that you carry on enjoying the many interesting things provided for you. We are sure that your school will continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Bernice Magson

Lead Inspector