

# Howe Dell Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117220
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312534
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Florence Olajide

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Brian Dummer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Debra Massey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	The Runaway Hatfield Hertfordshire AL10 9AH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 263291
<b>Fax number</b>	01707 258248

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average sized primary school was relocated to new premises in the week preceding this inspection. It is located in a part of Hatfield town, which has undergone recent regeneration. The new purpose-built premises are a result of the Local Authority's re-organisation. They incorporate sustainable and environmentally friendly principles and features. The premises include a Children's Centre which is scheduled to open imminently, following appropriate approval.

Although the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, a diverse range of minority ethnic groups are represented, each in very small numbers. Pupils come from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is lower than average as are those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language. The senior leadership team and all but two of the teaching staff were appointed within the last two years.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This good school promotes an exceedingly caring ethos in which pupils flourish emotionally. This strong ethos is underpinned by a good and exciting 'education for sustainable development' (ESD) curriculum, which allows pupils to make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community and to develop mature and responsible attitudes towards each other and their environment. Consequently, their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have good attitudes to their work and derive much enjoyment from learning as shown by their good behaviour and attendance. The latter is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

There has been a legacy of underachievement in the past in which many pupils did not make good progress given their broadly average starting points. This was partly due to weak teaching and a high level of staff and pupil mobility over the six years during which the new premises were built and the school re-organised. The quality of teaching is now good with some examples of exemplary practice. There are new, but increasingly effective assessment systems, and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. These have enabled leaders to have an accurate understanding of the progress of individual pupils and to target any underachievement. This combined with the good teaching is contributing to the good progress that the majority of pupils are now making. Consequently, achievement is now good. Nonetheless, the progress of some pupils, particularly in writing, is slower than it should be. As a result, although improving, standards overall are satisfactory.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's dynamism combined with a 'can do' attitude has successfully brought all members of the school community together towards the common goal of improving pupils' achievement. Other leaders, governors and staff, support the headteacher well and all take responsibility for raising standards throughout the school. Even so, some aspects of assessment have yet to become fully embedded. As the school has grown, larger groups of pupils have begun to emerge. The school is yet to begin collating the data for individual pupils to get a clearer overview of the progress of groups to ensure that all pupils make equally good progress. In addition, improvement strategies do not always identify measurable outcomes for pupils to promote a faster rate of progress.

Care, guidance and support are good with pastoral care being particularly strong. Nevertheless, because some pupils do not know their targets, they are unable to take more responsibility for their own learning.

The school provides good value for money and significant improvements over the past two years indicate good capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Pupils learn in a stimulating environment that maximises the opportunities for creative play and the development of social skills. Pupils have access to good quality indoor and outdoor activities and resources. They enjoy their time in school and relate well to the adults. They are well cared for in a calm and secure environment. The friendly and welcoming atmosphere fosters their confidence and self-esteem. As such children appear happy and well adjusted.

The planning and organisation of the curriculum is good and learning activities match pupils' needs and abilities. The teaching is also good with some exemplary practice. Consequently, by

the end of the Foundation Stage, pupils achieve standards that are well in line with national expectations in all aspects of their learning except writing, where standards are lower. The school recognises this and has begun to implement strategies aimed at improving the pupils' achievement in writing.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in Key Stage 2 and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school, particularly in writing.
- Enable pupils to take more responsibility for their learning by ensuring that they all know their targets.
- Use data more effectively to focus school improvement, and check more carefully that all pupils are making equally good progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In 2007, standards at the end of Year 2 were above average, continuing the general trend over the past four years. In contrast, standards at the end of Year 6 have been lower than average for the last three years. The underachievement caused by the turbulence of the past is now being redressed. The school's data and inspection evidence show that standards in the current Years 3 to 6 are satisfactory overall with the majority of pupils making good progress. Writing nonetheless remains an area of weakness.

The school has worked hard at improving the achievement of the more able pupils and sets challenging targets towards this end. Although many of the targets for this group were not met in 2007, more pupils achieved the higher levels 3 and 5 than in 2006. Vulnerable pupils, those who speak English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also making good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously. Their thoughtful behaviour towards each other contributes to the school's very positive climate. For example, playground 'buddies' show great commitment towards making playtimes better for their peers and look out for those who do not have friends to play with. Pupils are happy, enjoy school a great deal and are very enthusiastic about their attendance. One parent noted that she could not book dental appointments during the day because her child refused to miss school. The school actively promotes healthy lifestyles. Most of the pupils adopt these, although some still struggle with choosing healthy food options. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community through a range of roles such as the children's council, playground buddies and the 'ECO Squad' which represents pupils' views on environmental issues. Pupils' basic skills are satisfactory and the school is working hard at improving this aspect of provision.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Most of the teaching is good and there is some exemplary practice. Planning is very thorough and lessons are well structured. Teachers use a range of strategies and make good use of resources including information and communication technology to make lessons lively. This motivates pupils who say that one of the reasons why they like school is that 'teaching is fun'. Pupils' good attitudes to learning and the purposeful tasks they are provided ensure that no time is wasted. Well-trained teaching assistants provide teachers and pupils with good support. Some teaching is only satisfactory, because insufficient use is made of assessment to check pupils' understanding, correct misconceptions and move them on swiftly to the next stage in their learning.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is vibrant with a wide variety of clubs and other activities both in and out of school. A large number of visits and visitors broaden the curriculum and excite pupils who enjoy what the school has to offer and make good use of the opportunities provided. Themed events called 'Wonder days' capture the imagination of pupils and their parents and promote a strong enjoyment of learning. There is good provision for the arts and sport, and pupils have had opportunities to perform as a choir at the Royal Albert Hall. Provision for physical education has improved since the last inspection and now meets statutory requirements. The ESD principles are firmly embedded within all aspects of the curriculum as well as the new school premises. This strongly promotes pupils' personal, social and moral development. For example, pupils' involvement in the design and building of the new school has contributed to their strong awareness of environmental issues and their responsibility towards the world they live in. The school recognises that the curriculum is not yet enabling pupils to achieve as well as they could in writing. It has begun to address this through a range of appropriate strategies such as the writing 'wonder days', the boys' writing project and the early writing project for pupils in the Foundation Stage.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The pastoral care of the pupils is outstanding and they thrive in the caring and stimulating environment. There are appropriate procedures to safeguard their well-being. There is a range of intervention programmes to support pupils academically and emotionally and the school carefully tracks the progress of those who are experiencing social or relationship difficulties. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils are being encouraged to become more involved in their own learning through the use of targets. However, this is not improving achievement as well as it could because pupils do not always remember their targets. This limits the degree of responsibility they can take for their own learning.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The confidence that the headteacher inspires in all members of the school community is well deserved. Together with all the staff and governors, she has created a strong team spirit in which everyone works towards a common goal. The new assessment and tracking systems have been influential in helping the school tackle the underachievement, which was evident in past performance. A strong focus on professional development has helped to improve the skills of all teachers and leaders. For example, 'School Self Evaluation' accreditation has ensured that all leaders and governors have a clear view of the school strengths and weaknesses. While school improvement priorities are appropriate, some targets or measurable outcomes are yet to become specific enough to promote a faster rate of improvement. There is good emphasis on ensuring that individual pupils make good progress. However, the school does not always aggregate this data to check that all year groups make equally good progress in all subjects.

The leadership has done well to improve attendance over the last year. Governors are supportive and effective in their role as 'critical friend'. The school maintains very positive relationships with a wide range of external agencies and uses these to good effect in improving provision for pupils.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
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	3

### 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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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	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 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Howe Dell Primary School, The Runway, Hatfield AL10 9AH

Thank you for talking to us and telling us your views about your school during our recent visit. It was a real pleasure for us to be part of the opening of your new school. We know it is an exciting time especially since many of you have been involved in planning the building for a long time. This letter is to tell you what we thought about your school.

Your school is good. You and all the adults treat each other with a lot of respect and kindness. This has created a special feeling in your school, which makes it a happy place. You all work and play together very well. You try very hard to do what is right and to do your best. The teaching is good and the school provides you with many interesting learning activities both in and out of school. You told us that you enjoy these very much and your parents agreed. You make an excellent contribution to your school and the environment. We were very impressed at how well you care for each other and the concern you have for nature and the wildlife.

We think that some of you, especially the older ones, have not done as well as you could in your work in the past. Although most of you are now making good progress, many of you are not doing as well as you could in your writing. We also noticed that when we asked you to tell us your targets (what you needed to do or learn to get better at your work), many of you could not remember.

We know that your headteacher and the staff work very hard to provide you with a good education. To make your school even better, we have suggested they do the following.

- Help you to achieve better and improve faster particularly in your writing
- Find ways to help you remember your targets so that you can be more involved in your learning
- Improve how they use information on how well you are doing to help you learn better, and check that you are all making good progress.

We hope that you will continue to work hard and do your best. We wish you all well in the future.

Florence Olajide

Lead Inspector