

# Harwood Hill

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117227
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312537
<b>Inspection date</b>	5 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Dorothy Bathgate HMI

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	171
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr James Godbold
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Cousins
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 September 2004
<b>School address</b>	Harwood Close Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL8 7SN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 322855
<b>Fax number</b>	01707 331245

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues; achievement and standards, teaching and learning and leadership and management. Evidence was collected from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data, tracking documentation and discussion with the headteacher and senior management team. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as detailed in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Harwood Hill is a smaller than average size primary school. Pupils enter the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are broadly in line with expectations. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. In recent years, the school has seen a significant rise in the number of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, many of whom have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Harwood Hill is an outstanding school that makes a real difference to the lives of its pupils. The school has successfully created a happy and vibrant atmosphere where pupils of all abilities and backgrounds do their best. Helping its pupils to grow into caring and confident young citizens is an exemplary feature of the school. The school places the highest priority on developing their self-confidence and self-esteem in a safe environment of trust and respect. Consequently, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. One parent wrote, 'I have nothing but praise for this school, I cannot thank them enough!'

Outstanding teaching ensures that pupils make outstanding progress across the school. Small cohorts, with high inward mobility, result in some variations in standards from year to year. However, there is a clear trend of consistently high standards in recent years and overall standards are excellent. Robust assessment and monitoring systems clearly demonstrate that all pupils make outstanding progress. By the end of Year 2 in 2007, standards were well above average in writing and mathematics and exceptionally well above average in reading. By the end of Year 6 in 2007, standards were exceptionally high in English and well above average in science and mathematics. The work of pupils currently in Year 6 and the school's accurate assessments of their performance, show that the school is set to maintain these high standards. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make at least as good progress as their peers.

Central to the pupils' excellent progress in this school, is the outstanding work of their teachers. There is a strong sense of team unity amongst all staff as they work together to maximise the quality of what goes on in each classroom. Teachers know their pupils very well and are skilful at matching activities to pupils' interests and abilities. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons because teachers make them interesting and fun. This was observed during the inspection in many outstanding lessons where the energetic and enthusiastic approach of the staff inspired high levels of motivation from the pupils. Learning for a purpose is a dominant feature of the teaching. For example, in an outstanding Year 1 lesson, pupils were writing invitations for their teddy bears, inviting them to attend school the next day. Recently introduced procedures in Year 6 for pupils to engage in 'self-differentiation', a system based on menu style options within lessons, are beginning to enable these older pupils to work at more challenging levels for longer periods. However, although there is appropriate challenge provided for higher attaining pupils in all classes, there is scope for moving these pupils onto extension activities at an earlier point in a number of lessons than is sometimes the case at present.

An outstanding curriculum enhances the quality of teaching and learning. The school makes excellent use of its local community to enrich pupils' learning through first hand experiences. Pupils enjoy visiting a local mill to see bread making in progress and they consider how the arts are used in worship by visiting the local church. Cross-curricular planning is a significant strength of the school. In a Year 5 lesson observed, pupils were linking Greek topic work with instruction writing in literacy, as they made Greek vases.

Leadership and management are outstanding because of the excellent guidance and role model provided by the headteacher. She has successfully created a culture of high expectations as well as a determination to embrace change in a positive and meaningful way. The school's processes for self-evaluation are strong and take account of the views of staff, governors and

parents. Consequently, self-evaluation is well founded and accurate, resulting in a clearly prioritised development plan and effective action to remedy weaknesses and raise standards. The school has received the Investors in People award, in recognition of its commitment to continuing professional development for all staff. A robust performance management system is successfully linked to improving pupils' academic success. Governors are extremely well informed about school development and contribute significantly to school improvement.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and contribute strongly to pupils' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Child protection procedures are fully in place. Arrangements for ensuring health, safety and welfare are robust and risk assessments are undertaken regularly. There are highly effective partnerships with parents and a range of local agencies that safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Academic guidance for pupils is of the highest quality. The in-depth knowledge that staff have of pupils ensures that pupils' targets are both realistic and challenging. Marking is of a high quality and tells pupils what they need to do next to improve their work.

As a result of the very good quality care, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, as reflected in their well above average attendance, and feel very safe within its supportive environment. The school rightly prides itself in creating a warm and caring ethos where positive relationships exist at all levels. Consequently, behaviour is exemplary both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Cultural awareness is developed strongly through the arts and a sound understanding of different faiths. Pupils are sensitive to the variety of cultural traditions that exist within their own school community and show respect for these. Pupils and parents welcome the high priority given to promoting healthy lifestyles. Pupils make very good choices in relation to a balanced diet. Many participate in a wide range of sports and games at breaks, lunch times and at after-school clubs. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their lives as future citizens. Highly effective partnerships with local businesses provide pupils with excellent opportunities to experience workplace related learning. These include conducting market research and seeing, first-hand, construction industry skills. The school council, assembly discussions, circle times and class debates provide appropriate forums for pupils to express their views. They know their views are listened to and that their opinions matter. Consequently, pupils feel highly valued as individuals.

This consistently high performing school is extremely well placed to improve further because it demonstrates a continuous drive and commitment to school improvement, and the raising of standards. This is summed up aptly by one parent who wrote, 'I am delighted with the school. My son has made fantastic progress!'

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Overall, children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress and most are working well within, or beyond the early learning goals, by the end of the Reception year. The excellent care, guidance and support ensure that children make exceptional progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Children's positive attitudes to work and their ability to work and play together happily, prepare them well for the next stage in their learning. Teaching is of a good quality because all staff, including teaching assistants, have an excellent understanding of how young children learn. The colourful, exciting and well-planned learning environment ensures that children have equal access to all six areas of learning and experience a broad, rich and exciting curriculum. A high priority is placed on learning through play, both indoors and

outdoors. The outdoor play area is used imaginatively in all weathers and there are all kinds of activities including the new climbing wall, wobbly bridge and the rope climb, just waiting to be explored. Parents speak highly of the good induction procedures and appreciate opportunities to attend workshops, library sessions and trips. The Nursery teacher provides very good leadership and management and has a clear vision for the future development of this successful integrated Foundation Stage unit.

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

- Ensure that higher attaining pupils access extension activities at appropriate stages in all lessons.

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## 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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

6 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Harwood Hill Primary, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7AG

It was lovely to visit your school recently and you all made me feel so welcome. Thank you very much. I really enjoyed talking to many of you during my visit. I particularly enjoyed meeting the pupils in Year 1 who were writing some very special invitations for their teddy bears! I was also very impressed with the Year 6 children who demonstrated a great deal of maturity as they selected appropriate work from their self-differentiation menu. One of my favourite moments was visiting the Year 5 class, where the pupils were thoroughly enjoying instruction writing which was linked to their Greek topic work, through making Greek vases. You all enjoy many exciting lessons and you told me that you find your lessons interesting and fun. I agree!

You told me that you think Harwood Hill is a very good school and that you are very proud of it. You are quite right to be proud of your school because

Harwood Hill is outstanding! Your behaviour is excellent both inside the classroom and outside in the playground. Well done! Your head teacher and teachers work extremely hard to help you in every way they can, and you all work well together in a calm, caring environment. You all feel very safe in school and trust your friends and all the staff.

By the end of your time at Harwood Hill you are very well prepared for the next stage in your education and for your role as future citizens. This is because of the high standards you achieve in your work and the many opportunities you have to experience work-related learning such as market research and construction industry skills.

However, even excellent schools like Harwood Hill can make some things better. Those of you who learn quickly need to be given extension work earlier in some lessons than is the case at present. This will allow you to work for longer periods on the more challenging activities, and consequently improve your learning.

Thank you for such an exciting and enjoyable day. Keep up the excellent work!

With best wishes for the future

Dorothy Bathgate HMI