

# Harwell Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123062
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314473
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Charalambos Loizou

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	147
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs L Wilkinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P Cansell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	The Styles Harwell Didcot OX11 0LH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01235 835337
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Harwell is a small rural primary school. Nearly all the pupils are of White British heritage and come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well above that of most schools. Two of the six classes in the school are mixed-age. There are well established links with other schools and organisations, including international links as part of the Comenius Project. The school has achieved national recognition as a healthy school and an eco school, as well as gaining the Active Mark and Football Association Charter Status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Harwell is a good school where pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. An outstanding curriculum and good teaching are of great benefit to the pupils' excellent personal development and behaviour. Pupils enjoy school very much, as one said, 'There is never a dull moment here'. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher, governors and staff have ensured that the school is central to village life and extends beyond into the wider community. Pupils are very aware of their role in the community through activities such as charitable fund raising, village fetes, Mummers Plays and numerous opportunities to undertake surveys. For example, they wrote to the local council after researching the feasibility of building a safe cycle route to school.

The large majority of parents are very pleased with the school. One rightly commented, 'Children experience a wide spectrum of activities'. The lively and stimulating curriculum incorporates an excellent range of projects that help pupils to adopt healthy and active lifestyles, including sports. The school council introduced the 'toast club' as well as 'fruit and veg' snacks at break times. Pupils are very determined to ensure that the Eco flag hangs proudly at the school entrance when participating in initiatives linked to conservation, re-cycling and sustainability. Pupils are very mature and excellent ambassadors when proudly showing new families and visitors (or the inspector!) around the school.

The quality of provision for children in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. In the rest of the school, the teaching is consistently good. As a result, standards are improving well in Key Stage 2 and, after a period of decline in Key Stage 1, they are also rising in Years 1 and 2. Pupils do particularly well in reading, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). However, their performance in writing is relatively weaker as standards are average and should be higher. Many pupils lack the confidence to organise, spell and punctuate their writing accurately. This is because lessons do not always allow sufficient time for editing. Teachers provide very good opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in different subjects to specific projects. For example, pupils in Year 6 researched how best to convince local councillors to build a playground space for children. The class teacher rightly sums up the impact of this work when stating that this is 'writing for a real purpose'.

Assessments are used well to support pupils with LDD and those who have statements of special educational need. For other pupils, there is scope to improve assessment to ensure that all pupils reach their targets. National tests results for example, particularly in Key Stage 1, show that some pupils did not reach their expected targets. Improvements to the teaching are addressing this although the assessment information collected for analysis is too cumbersome for teachers to regularly check if pupils are on course to reach their targets.

The headteacher and governors have accurately assessed the school's work and effectiveness and have made good improvements since the last inspection. The school is well placed to make further progress.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 1

Highly skilled teaching and a stimulating curriculum ensure that Reception children move swiftly towards the early learning goals expected of five-year-olds. By the time they start Year 1, the majority of children are working comfortably within the early stages of the National Curriculum.

The children's social and emotional development is rapid, and they cooperate well with others. The effective teaching of letter sounds and opportunities to handle books successfully develop the children's language and communication skills. Children happily engage in role-play, imagining for example, that they are exploring a dungeon when constructing a castle with building blocks. Creative and scientific skills are reinforced well as children explore textures, for instance when mixing and sculpting dough to make Christmas mince pies and jam tarts. The staff pose challenging questions that extend children's thinking. Outdoor areas are very stimulating, including the wicker tunnel and dome that encourage children to explore spaces. Children successfully develop early mathematical skills, for example when playing 'racing turtles' using dice to count and match colours. The staff have established very good relations with parents and there is a smooth transition into Year 1.

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

- Provide more opportunities in lessons for pupils to improve the accuracy of their independent writing to raise standards.
- Organise assessment information better so that it is more accessible and helps teachers and the leadership team to make regular checks so that all pupils reach their targets.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

The majority of children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are in line with those expected of four-year-olds. However, in previous years attainment on entry has sometimes been below average. The children achieve well because of good teaching, care and support. The standards reached by children in the Reception year are above those expected in language, communication and mathematics, and are much higher in their personal, social and emotional development. Although national test results for Year 2 pupils have shown a decline in recent years, the leadership team has strengthened the teaching so that pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress. As a result, more pupils are on course to reach much higher levels compared with previous years. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6 because of consistently good teaching. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 in reading and science, and well above average in mathematics. Writing standards are lower, and are only average, reflecting weaknesses in the organisation and accuracy of pupils' independent writing. Pupils with LDD, including those with a statement of special educational need, make good progress throughout the school because they are consistently well supported.

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

#### **Grade: 1**

Pupils form excellent relationships and mature into courteous and responsible young people. They adopt excellent healthy and active lifestyles and attitudes through participating in activities such as sport and the creative arts. They learn about health and safety when researching safe cycle routes or when performing a play about 'secrets', aimed at safeguarding pupils. The pupils are very sensitive to the needs of others less fortunate than they are, such as their active sponsorship of a boy in Tanzania. The 'veg box' scheme is an excellent community initiative that encourages families to order and buy fresh vegetable from a local farm shop. Pupils are very aware of their responsibilities towards caring for the environment through the numerous ecological projects. They have for example, researched ways of using natural resources to produce heating and lighting, 'This is a problem', says one pupil, 'when we looked into this we

calculated that a wind turbine would not be cost effective'. Pupils' reflection on and celebration of festivals from around the world helps heighten their awareness of cultural diversity. The pupils' ICT and basic skills give them a good basis for their future education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers plan their work carefully and strike a good balance between class discussions and practical tasks that stimulate the pupils' interests. Thought provoking class discussions, for example about characters in stories or definitions of words lead to good opportunities for pupils to write for a range of purposes. Independent tasks are often linked to projects or extend to further research using ICT and other resources. However, lessons do not always leave enough time for pupils to edit or correct the accuracy of their writing. Drama, 'talk partners' and 'hot seating' (where pupils put questions to another who is playing the role of a character), are used to very good effect so pupils can share ideas. They also engage in practical tasks to reinforce their knowledge and understanding. In Year 2 for example, pupils investigated different ways of recording coinage to solve number and money problems. Lessons are consistently of good quality, although teachers sometimes miss opportunities to make regular checks of the pupils' performance. Consequently, tasks are not always tailored to extend the pupils towards the next level or target.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is very strong, particularly in supporting pupils' personal development and enjoyment of learning. Staff have successfully devised a stimulating and balanced programme with strong links between subjects and with other schools and organisations. This was very evident in the work that pupils in Year 6 produced during an excellent project called 'Harwell Heroes'. They were involved in an excellent range of activities that included organising sponsorship to fund and research a project to make and test a racing car. They designed the finished product, forming a special race team to race their car against other schools at Goodwood and Rockingham. The school provides very well for the development of pupils' skills in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Modern foreign languages are taught right across the school and, in addition to extensive sport and music teaching, these enrich and extend the curriculum further, preparing the pupils well for secondary education. Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are enhanced through a wide range of visits and visitors.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school has effective arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of all pupils. Every pupil is known and treated as an individual. Consequently, pupils are safe and confidently approach an adult if they have a problem. Vulnerable pupils including those with a variety of learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported. The school works effectively in partnership with other agencies to support and integrate all pupils who have special educational needs. Assessment is used well to track the progress of pupils but the information is not easily accessible for teachers to check if pupils are on course to reach their targets.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

There is effective leadership at all levels. The staff's dedication to the pupils, their families and to the local community, have guided good improvements since the last inspection. The headteacher and governors have accurately assessed the school's performance and have rightly prioritised writing as the main area for improvement. Development planning takes good account of pupils' views as well as those of parents. Assessment systems have improved well since the last inspection, although the information gathered by senior staff about pupils' performance and progress is not always being used to check if pupils are on course to reach their targets. The headteacher has introduced an effective programme of monitoring that involves teachers visiting each others lessons and sharing best practice. This has been successful in developing and strengthening the teaching and has ensured that standards improve. Governors provide effective support and there are good systems used to help them check the school's performance. Indoor and outdoor resources, including ICT, are of good quality, and create a stimulating learning environment for the 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	1
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	2
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?	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	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?	1
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	2
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

7 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harwell Primary School, Didcot, OX11 0LH

I was very pleased to visit your school. You made me feel really welcome and I especially enjoyed my tour of the school with a group of pupils who are excellent ambassadors. Well done and thank you! I think that you go to a good school. You all work very hard with your teachers and I agree with the many parents who say that your school is an exciting place to learn and play and is an important part of Harwell village. Your special projects are fantastic and I was very impressed with many different things that have happened since your school was last inspected. There are many good things about your school. These are some of the things I was pleased with most.

- Your teachers and support staff are good at helping you to reach good standards and you are extremely well behaved and polite.
- You enjoy school very much and I can see why because there are many things for you to do. I really liked your art work and those lovely clay pots. The 'Big Draw' looked like good fun.
- I really enjoyed the celebration and that wonderful performance of the nativity. Well done children, you were all great. The narrators were also very good at making sure everything was done in the right order, brilliant!
- I was very impressed with the school council and how it helps to improve the school.
- Your parents are very pleased with you and your teachers and the school works very closely with them.
- The headteacher, staff and governors manage the school well and work hard to keep looking for ways to make the school even better.

I have asked your teachers to:

- help you all do even better in writing
- organise information better about how well you are doing so they can make regular checks to make sure that you all reach your targets.

Well done and I wish you all the very best.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector