

Harlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130954
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	315676
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Lloyd
Headteacher	Janice Spry-Shute
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Mallard Drive Uckfield TN22 5PW
Telephone number	01825 764244
Fax number	01825 764622

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school, with an attached Nursery. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, with a high proportion holding a statement of special educational need. There has been a large turnover of staff over the last few years. The school holds a Healthy School Award and a Sports Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Harlands is a satisfactory school. It has good features and is improving rapidly. The recent high staff turnover and extended periods of absence resulted in a slow pace of change for a time but now that staffing has stabilised, the school has begun to move forward again more quickly. The large majority of parents value the education provided by the school and have remained loyal to it during difficult times. One comment represented the views of many: 'I am lucky that my child attends the school. Staff are very approachable, helpful and really care about the children'. The school develops pupils' personal qualities well. Pupils behave well and respect the views of others, so that there is a calm atmosphere both in lessons and around the school. As more pupils with complex individual needs have joined the school, it has worked well with external bodies to develop its expertise to give them the support they need. It is particularly successful in supporting a few pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties so that the learning of others is not disrupted. Children get a good start in Reception. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties, then make satisfactory progress from the time they join Year 1 so that the school's overall performance in the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 is in line with national averages. This foundation gives pupils a satisfactory basis for the next stage of their education and their future lives. Pupils enjoy their learning and say that teachers make it fun. However, whilst lessons engage pupils, there is not always enough challenge in their tasks for them to progress at a fast pace. Changes in teaching this year are already helping pupils to develop a better understanding of the level of their work and of what they have to do to improve. Parents have appreciated the headteacher's strengths during a time of rapid staff changes. The focused actions she took to address areas of weakness have ensured that the school has continued to meet its targets. The school has now regained its capacity for further improvement. Adults work together very well as a staff team and know what has to be done to improve academic achievement. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' attainment and the school recognises how it can use this information more effectively in the future to plan work which meets pupils' individual learning needs more closely.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The stimulating ethos and secure environment in the Foundation Stage help children to establish very positive relationships with one another and with adults, giving them a good start to school life. As one parent commented, 'Starting school was a happy experience for my child'. The close liaison between the Nursery and Reception years, with many joint activities, ensures that children have experiences closely matched to their age and needs. This makes for a seamless transition as they grow older.

Children's attainment as they enter Reception varies significantly from year to year but is generally that expected of this age. However, some children have lower than expected language and communication skills. The strong focus on speaking and listening, alongside the early skills of reading, writing and numeracy, results in more children having the language skills expected for their age by the time they transfer to Year 1. Children's attainment in other aspects of their learning is often above that of other children of their age. Adults know each child very well and the close involvement and enthusiasm of adults in children's guided play makes a strong contribution to children's good personal development and acquisition of learning skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- use the information from pupils' assessments to plan work to match their needs more closely
- as part of developing the curriculum, make sure that pupils are given more challenging tasks.

A small proportion of 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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From a broadly average start when pupils join Year 1, they consolidate their basic skills in literacy and numeracy and most reach the expected standards at the end of Years 2 and 6. Last year, pupils' progress was variable from class to class and the legacy of too many changes of teacher means that there is still some catching up to do. However, standards in the national tests were broadly maintained but with fewer pupils reaching the higher levels. A focus on improving boys' attainment was successful, significantly narrowing the gap between the performance of boys and girls across the school. Current teaching is beginning to make progress more consistent through the school. Pupils apply their basic skills well in other subjects, achieving satisfactorily across a broad range of interesting topics. Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good as a result of the widespread use of laptops and interactive whiteboards and an effective emphasis on the use of computers as learning tools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel valued and enjoy coming to school. Consequently, attendance is exceptionally high. The positive relationships and sense of belonging promote their social development well. They work together effectively and most pupils are confident and articulate when they communicate with others and in front of an audience. Activities in lessons and extra-curricular activities promote pupils' spiritual and cultural development well. They have a strong moral sense and a clear idea of what is fair because they understand the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are safe in school and know whom to turn to if they have any concerns. They are confident that bullying and any misbehaviour are not tolerated and any instances are dealt with effectively. Vulnerable pupils develop well because they have access to sensitive and skilled support. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and participate in a wide range of physical activities. They behave responsibly around the school and many make valuable contributions to the school and wider community, for example, as school council members, by using their ICT skills to improve the format of school newsletters or raising funds for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have a shared understanding of how to get the best out of pupils so that pupils make good progress in lessons. Teachers 'set the scene' for learning well, making lesson objectives clear and explaining to pupils what they need to do to achieve these. The activities used catch pupils' interest, for example the use of games in mathematics to consolidate and extend understanding. One parent encapsulated this: 'They run into school each morning and exit

bubbly and overflowing with new experiences and ideas'. Useful new approaches are involving pupils well in their learning, such as the 'punctuation pyramids' for them to understand exactly what they have to do to reach the next level in writing. Teachers mark work regularly and the best marking gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve. However, the work set needs to be even more challenging, particularly for higher-attaining pupils, if all are to make faster progress over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is appropriately broad and meets national requirements. Some teachers are now piloting aspects of the new national guidance for English and mathematics in preparation for wider implementation across the school. Pupils have good opportunities to be creative through subjects such as music, art and drama activities. Effective links between some subjects make learning relevant and interesting for pupils. The school is aware that recent staffing difficulties delayed the development of the curriculum to take full advantage of subject links and national guidance. A key identified priority now is to develop the curriculum so that it becomes more challenging for pupils and increases their achievement. Parents are appreciative of the curriculum information provided for them to keep in touch with their child's learning. The opportunity to go on visits and the range of visitors to the school adds significantly to pupils' learning. Sport and a range of extra-curricular activities make an important contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's support systems to ensure pupils' well-being and safety are up to date and secure. The school recognises each pupil's individuality and this contributes significantly to the successful inclusion of all in school life. The support for the most vulnerable pupils is particularly effective, especially for those who have behavioural difficulties. Outside agencies are effectively involved to supplement the expertise available in the school.

The systems to promote a smooth transition from one class to another are effectively ensuring the continuity of education. The tracking of pupils' progress is constantly being refined to make it more effective. In particular, the involvement of all teachers in setting annual performance targets for each pupil is making an important contribution to their understanding of pupils' needs. The school recognises that it can make even better use of its data to identify more precisely what has to be taught to improve progress further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides determined and inspirational leadership which has remained resolute in the face of challenging circumstances in recent years. Governors' partnership with the school and their understanding of its needs have enabled them to make important decisions about its future development, whilst providing a good balance of support and challenge for its work.

The school team is now strong. There is a culture of optimism, and staff are responding well to the opportunities for taking more responsibility and the professional development that that entails. The appointment of a deputy headteacher rounds off the devolvement of responsibilities.

Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The school has very effective methods to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Because of recent staffing difficulties, only some initiatives, such as the ICT project, have had a positive effect on pupils' standards and achievement; others have yet to have an impact. Staff are well aware that developments have been delayed, but there is a clear understanding across the school about what has to be done now. The capacity for development to ensure that all pupils make better progress to reach their full potential is good and the school is confidently setting increasingly challenging targets.

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

Achievement and standards

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

3 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harlands Primary School, Uckfield, TN22 5PW

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave us when we visited recently. We very much enjoyed meeting you and I said that I would let you know what we had found.

These are the main things we found out about your school:

- you work hard and do interesting activities in lessons
- you mostly reach standards similar to those of other pupils of your age
- those of you who have just joined the Reception class have settled quickly and enjoy learning a lot
- you behave well around the school and in lessons
- you understand about the best things to eat and why it is good to exercise
- you enjoy taking responsibility for things like the school council or fundraising for others
- you all get on very well together and this makes the school a really enjoyable place to be
- you understand about the best things to eat and why it is good to take exercise
- the headteacher and the staff think very carefully about how well the school is doing and take action quickly if they think something needs improving
- most of your parents or carers think it is a good school that helps you feel safe and learn well.

What we have asked the school to do now:

- use your assessments to plan exactly what you have to learn next
- make sure that you are always stretched to do your very best.

We hope that you will continue to work hard to make your school and your parents proud of you, and wish you every success in the future.

Best wishes

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector

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Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector