

Highwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131689
Local Authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Inspection number	315851
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Derek Watts

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	214
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Jacobs
Headteacher	Mr Joe Moyster (Acting Executive)
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Fairwater Drive Woodley Reading RG5 3JE
Telephone number	0118 926 5493
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Highwood Primary School is smaller than average. Pupil numbers have gradually declined since the last inspection. Nearly two thirds of pupils come from a White British background and about one fifth are from a Pakistani background. The remaining proportion come from a range of other minority ethnic groups. An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average, but a much higher than average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Difficulties lie mainly in the areas of moderate learning, behaviour, and speech, language and communication. The school has a 24-place Speech and Language Resource. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in Nursery and Reception. The current acting executive headteacher has been in post since September 2008. He is also headteacher of a local junior school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Highwood Primary is satisfactory. Recent improvements to assessment and teaching have eliminated some past underachievement, demonstrating that the school has the capacity to improve further. Pupils are making satisfactory progress from their starting points. Effective pastoral care and a positive school climate lead to good personal development and well-being for pupils. Those from the Speech and Language Resource receive good specialist teaching and are well integrated into school activities. They make good progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The executive headteacher brings good experience to the school and is providing strong leadership and educational direction. Senior staff and governors have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what is needed to bring about improvement. The new senior leadership team is well focused on raising achievement and improving teaching. Some key subject leaders are new to their post and are not yet fully involved in monitoring and improving their areas of responsibility.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are strengths of the school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their keen participation in activities. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are courteous and friendly, and relate well to others. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles extremely well and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They thrive on the additional responsibilities given, such as serving on the school council and raising funds for charities.

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The school has taken positive action to rectify underachievement in literacy in Years 1 and 2 and in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Effective strategies have been implemented for the teaching of reading and writing. However, opportunities for investigative and problem-solving work in mathematics and science are not consistent throughout the school. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. There are examples of good practice. When teaching is good, pupils are challenged well, tasks are closely matched to pupils' abilities, and learning maintains a brisk pace. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school. In some lessons, levels of challenge and pace are not high enough, and the rate of learning slows. A good range of additional activities enriches a satisfactory curriculum.

Parents' views of the school are mixed. Most are happy with the care and education provided for their children. The approachability of staff, pupils' enjoyment and the provision for pupils in the Speech and Language Resource receive particular praise. However, an appreciable minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire do not believe that the school takes sufficient account of their concerns. A number are worried about the executive headteacher being temporary and part time. Governors and senior staff recognise the need to address these issues with parents.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills below the levels expected for their age. A noticeable proportion of children arrive with limited communication, language and literacy skills. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory and children are provided with a suitable range of learning activities.

Children make good progress in their personal and social development because of good relationships between adults and children, and the careful attention that the staff give to children's welfare. Progress in other areas of learning is satisfactory. There is a sound range of outdoor activities and learning resources, but these are not sufficiently linked to the main topic or theme. Role-play areas are limited, meaning that opportunities for creativity are missed. By the end of Reception, standards are below average overall and attainment is still low in areas of linking letters to sounds, reading and writing. There are good opportunities for children to develop speaking and listening skills. However, activities and resources aimed at enabling the children to acquire and practise basic writing skills are not prominent enough. The school has clear plans for the improvement of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards by the end of Year 6, particularly in mathematics and science, by increasing investigative and problem-solving work.
- Ensure that the good teaching is more widely spread, that tasks in all lessons challenge pupils at the right level, and that learning maintains a quick pace.
- Extend the role of new leaders and managers so they are fully effective in monitoring and improving performance.
- Improve provision and children's progress in Early Years Foundation Stage.

A small proportion of the 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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 2 were broadly average at the last inspection and steadily declined. National assessments indicate that in 2008, standards were exceptionally low in reading and writing and below average in mathematics. No pupils attained the higher-than-expected Level 3 in writing. Pupils did not make enough progress, particularly in reading and writing. Teacher changes in Years 1 and 2 led to inconsistencies in assessment and teaching, and this contributed to pupils' lower performance. However, sharper assessment and improved teaching has accelerated pupils' progress and has eliminated the past underachievement in Year 1 and 2. Consequently, more pupils are currently working at the higher levels, especially in writing. National test results last year for Year 6 were broadly average in English, mathematics and science. The evidence indicates that pupils did not make sufficient progress from their prior attainment in Year 2, particularly in mathematics. However, effective steps are being taken to improve performance in mathematics, and the teaching has been strengthened and has improved pupils' performance in other subjects. Pupils learning English as an additional language make sound progress. An effective blend of good specialist teaching and well-targeted support enables pupils from the Speech and Language Resource to make good progress. Learning support assistants help to ensure that pupils have full access to the activities in the main school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show considerable care and consideration

for others. Pupils respect and value others from different faiths and backgrounds. Behaviour is good in class and around the school. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils, are very positive. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles, and demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. They make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously, and have contributed to improvements to the playground organisation and facilities. Pupils support those who are less well off than themselves by raising funds for national and global charities. During the inspection, pupils in Years 3 to 6 performed their school play 'A Ladd in Trouble' confidently at the local community centre. Pupils are adequately prepared for the future. Their personal and social skills are well developed, and they make sound progress in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory, as shown by its impact on pupils' progress. Pupils know what they are expected to learn, because the purpose of a lesson is effectively shared at the start. Teachers establish good relationships with their pupils and manage them well. Pupils respond positively to teachers' clear and informative explanations and instructions. As the pupils said, 'Our teachers explain things carefully'. Questioning is used well by teachers to check pupils' understanding of new learning. When assessment information is used effectively, activities and tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. In these lessons, pupils are challenged well and they make good gains in their learning. However, activities and tasks are not always sufficiently well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the more able. Not all lessons proceed at a good pace, and the rate of learning then declines. Learning support assistants are well deployed and make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly in the case of those who need additional help with speech and language. There are some good examples of marking where praise and encouragement is provided for good work, and there are helpful comments to guide improvement. This good practice is not consistent in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development and promotes satisfactory progress. Provision for English, mathematics and science is satisfactory. Opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and for different purposes have been increased, and there are some good examples of pupils writing in other subjects. Opportunities for investigative work and problem-solving work in mathematics and science are not consistent in all years. A wide range of additional activities is provided, including clubs and visits. Popular clubs include cricket, dance, football, newspaper and rugby. A successful residential visit to the Isle of Wight for Year 6 develops pupils' geographical knowledge and skills as well as their personal skills. Health and safety education is promoted effectively throughout the curriculum, and this has a positive impact on pupils' healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's positive and welcoming atmosphere underpins pupils' good personal development. Pastoral care is a strong feature of the school, and there are good partnerships with outside agencies. Parents commented, 'Teaching staff are friendly, professional and approachable, and really care about the welfare of the children.' There are effective procedures to ensure that pupils are protected and safe at school. Pupils feel well cared for and are confident that there is always a grown-up they can turn to if they are upset or have a problem. Care and support for pupils in the Speech and Language Resource is good. Parents wrote, 'My child attends the Speech and Language Resource. He could not be in better hands' and 'The Resource is fantastic'. The school works hard to monitor and promote good attendance, but a small number of parents do not support the school's efforts. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has developed clear systems to assess and monitor pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils are set specific learning targets in literacy and numeracy, so most know what they need to do to improve. However, assessment and individual target setting are not sufficiently embedded to lead to consistently good progress for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers promote good care, and good personal development and well-being for pupils. The headteacher and senior staff are focused on improving pupils' achievement, teaching and the curriculum. The local authority provides good support in developing teaching and the curriculum.

School self-evaluation is satisfactory. Through effective monitoring, the headteacher and senior staff have a good overview of the quality of teaching. Positive action has been taken to develop and improve teaching. Some key subject leaders are developing in their roles, and have not been in post long enough to have been fully effective in monitoring and improving their areas of responsibility.

Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. The before- and after-school provision is much appreciated by working parents. Different cultures and religions are promoted satisfactorily through the curriculum. The school is keen to seek the views of parents to address any concerns they raise. The governors are supportive and have a clear understanding of the school's performance.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 learners' needs?	3
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highwood Primary School, Reading, RG5 3JE

Thank you so much for welcoming us into your school and showing us your work. We enjoyed our visit and would like to tell you what we have found. Yours is a satisfactory school.

These are the main strengths of the school.

- You really enjoy school.
- The school is a welcoming and pleasant place to be in.
- Pupils from the Speech and Language Resource make good progress.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.
- The staff take good care of you and give you good support.
- The school offers a good range of additional activities, including clubs and visits.

There are four things the school can work on to make improvements.

- Some of you could make more progress in English, mathematics and science, and reach higher standards.
- In some lessons, teachers could challenge you more and ensure that learning moves on at a quick pace.
- Some subject leaders are new and need more development and training to improve their areas of responsibility.
- Improvements to Nursery and Reception would help children to make more progress.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Derek Watts

Lead Inspector