

Homer First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109873
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	325049
Inspection date	24 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Thomas-Pounce

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	175
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	Mrs Gill Berksoy
Headteacher	Mrs Marjorie Clementson (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Testwood Road Windsor SL4 5RL
Telephone number	01753 867 436
Fax number	01753 865 398

Age group	5–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and, in doing so, investigated the:

- quality of Early Years Foundation Stage provision
- consistency of the school's use of assessment and its impact on pupils' progress
- impact of leadership and management on the provision for, and progress of, all pupils.

Discussions took place with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. In addition, observations were made throughout the school day. The inspectors also gathered evidence by analysing parents' questionnaires and the school's records of checks on the quality of its work, and by tracking pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own views, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Homer is a popular, smaller than average first school, situated to the west of Windsor. Very few pupils claim a free school meal. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Virtually all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. This includes pupils with emotional and behavioural needs as well as those with moderate learning difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start school in the term following their fifth birthday and spend up to three terms in the Reception class. Most children have attended some kind of pre-school setting. Following the departure of the previous headteacher, and until a substantive appointment can be made, the school is led and managed by a seconded senior teacher who was appointed as interim headteacher in January 2009.

The school holds a number of awards, including Healthy School and Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Parents are wholehearted in their support for it. One typically commented that 'this is a delightful school where parents, teachers and governors work together for the benefit of the pupils. Parent-teacher communication is excellent, and all children are known to the staff, which makes them feel valued and important'.

In this happy and caring community, staff know pupils well and relationships are excellent. The high-quality pastoral care leads to outstanding personal development, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour is outstanding and is one of the reasons pupils say they feel safe in school. Pupils' understanding of the importance of diet and physical activity is reflected in the school having gained Healthy School and Activemark awards. Pupils are keen to show independence and readily take on the variety of responsibilities available. For example, members of the school council have produced a very popular newsletter - High Five Homer - and they are working hard to encourage all pupils to get involved in the Walk to School Week to be held next term. Although the school operates very well as a cohesive community and local links are strong, planning to forge links with schools and communities in contrasting UK areas is at an early stage. This does not detract from the overall effective provision, and the school's contribution to community cohesion is good. It is seen as the heart of the community, as shown by the commitment of long-standing governors and strong support from the local parish church.

Considerable improvements in the past two years in the Early Years Foundation Stage have built on the satisfactory provision found at the last inspection. Consequently, children are now making good progress in Reception. On entry to the school, children's skills are broadly as expected for their age, but below in some key literacy skills. Good provision, well adapted to Reception children's needs, ensures they achieve well in all areas of learning.

Standards on entry to Year 1 are just above average, although slightly lower than this in some aspects of communication, language and literacy. By Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average and by Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and science are above those expected for pupils of this age. As a result of good teaching and a curriculum which is designed to make learning interesting and enjoyable, pupils make good progress overall. The slight dip in standards last year, caused by the slower progress made by girls in mathematics, is being successfully addressed. As result of robust tracking records and systematic monitoring, the school recognises that teachers' assessment of pupils' work needs to be more consistent. Occasionally, there is a lack of challenge in lessons, and this, combined with fewer opportunities for pupils to solve problems and investigate for themselves, means that progress has been slower, particularly in mathematics and for some higher-attaining pupils. Teachers are providing pupils with more opportunities to help each other identify improvements in their work and this is helping them to check on their own progress. Challenging targets help pupils understand how to improve their work. Links with external agencies are good and support pupils' learning and well-being effectively.

Leadership and management at all levels are good, with very effective teamwork being established. Although the school has been without a permanent headteacher for two terms, the change in leadership has not affected the performance of the school, and its pupils continue to make good progress. This is as a result of a strong senior leadership team, some of whom are recently appointed. They have worked extremely well with the two interim headteachers.

Many parents commented on the commitment of leaders at all levels, and how they have ensured that the school continues to grow and develop during the interregnum. The interim headteacher is building on the well-established systems for managing the school, and she is effective in ensuring that the quality of provision and the pupils' academic and personal development continue to be closely monitored.

Finances are well managed and the school is well resourced. It provides a very stimulating learning environment. Self-evaluation procedures help the school to identify appropriate areas for further development. A very clear agenda for school improvement has been set. Governors are well informed and give their time willingly to provide good support and challenge to the school.

Leaders and managers at all levels have been very successful in ensuring consistently good or better practice in all areas of the school's work. The school has been thorough in implementing improvements since the last inspection and as a result has maintained above-average standards. It has a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children learn happily and make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of very good support. All children enjoy school enormously and benefit from good learning opportunities, materials and equipment. Computers are used well to enhance learning. There are good opportunities for outdoor learning, and children can move freely between indoors and outdoors. They feel safe because of the caring vigilance of staff and robust measures to ensure their safety.

The care and guidance for all children is outstanding as a result of skilful teamwork by staff. All children were observed to be enthusiastic about the theme of dinosaurs, and were delighted to measure dinosaur models and compare them. They played imaginatively and talked confidently about their artwork. They created lovely dinosaur faces. They were keen to learn in mathematics, estimating numbers and speculating thoughtfully. Many are articulate, and the more able can spell simple words. Children's behaviour is excellent: they concentrate well, cooperate with one another superbly and help one another. They relate well to adults, including visitors. They eat healthily and take plenty of exercise. They learn well about the local community, and their future economic well-being is helped by their good standards in numeracy and information and communication technology.

Teaching is good. Staff have clear expectations of children and share these with them, so that children know what they need to do and how to achieve it. Measures to improve the provision are well planned and monitored. Children's progress is tracked in an exemplary manner, trends are quickly identified and areas for improvement noted. As a result, the school has recently implemented an effective literacy programme. Links with the main feeder pre-school are good, having improved recently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the level of challenge and range of opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the school's contribution to community cohesion and increase pupils' awareness and understanding of how people in other areas differ from themselves.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/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?	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
The extent to which 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 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?	1

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Homer First School, Windsor, SL4 5RL

Thank you for helping the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your work and talking to you about your school. Please also thank your parents for returning our questionnaires and letting us know their views about your school.

These are some of the things we have included in our report about your school:

- your personal development, and the care, guidance and support your school gives you are outstanding and your behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent
- yours is a good school where you reach above-average standards and achieve well
- teaching and learning and the curriculum you study are good
- the leadership and management of your school are good.

We have asked the school to:

- make sure you have enough opportunities to investigate or solve problems for yourselves, especially in mathematics
- help you to learn more about people who live in Great Britain but who come from different backgrounds and cultures from your own.

You can do your bit to further improve the school by continuing to work hard as you do now.

Yours faithfully

Susan Thomas-Pounce

Lead Inspector