

Harrow Gate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111643
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	325422
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	David Shearsmith

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)	451
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 Barbara Murrey
Headteacher	Mathew Bourne
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Piper Knowle Road Stockton-on-Tees TS19 8DE
Telephone number	01642 673984
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of the new senior leadership team
- the impact of the new curriculum
- actions taken to ensure continued outstanding progress.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation document, national published assessment data, the school's records and procedures, observation of the school at work, parental questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. 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 assessments as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This above average sized school serves families in Stockton in a locality with marked social disadvantage. A well above average number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from White British heritage backgrounds. Of the few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, most do not have English as their first language. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs are well above average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in the Nursery and Reception classes. An acting headteacher is leading the school during the period that the substantive headteacher has been seconded by the local authority to work in another local school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that ensures excellent pupil achievement, both academically and personally. This is the result of highly effective teaching and learning, an exciting curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support.

Pupils show high levels of self-esteem, pride in their achievements and an excitement for learning. Most parents are delighted with the caring and positive influence the school has and this is evident from a significant number of positive comments. The strong leadership of the acting headteacher, who is well supported by the senior leadership team and a highly committed staff, ensures that high standards are maintained. Parents say, 'Harrow Gate is a fantastic school for the pupils and is continually moving forward'.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding and standards are above average. When children enter the school, their level of development is well below that which is typical for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and standards are below average when they enter Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and reach average standards as they enter Key Stage 2. Good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and standards for pupils at the end of Year 6 are above average. Consequently, pupils make outstanding progress overall from their starting points.

Pupils' personal, social and health education is excellent. It is well planned and ensures pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay safe, live a healthy lifestyle and deal with personal problems when they arise. Behaviour in the school is exemplary; pupils show high levels of self-respect and self-esteem. By the time they leave the school they are extremely well equipped to face the challenges of the next stage of their learning. Pupils enjoy their role in improving their school through the school council and are proud of the things that they do for the benefit of the school and wider community. They are keen fund-raisers who have a good understanding of the needs of others, and of the wider world although there are insufficient opportunities to explore global issues. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding is outstanding. They have a very good knowledge of other cultures and traditions, and they understand the diversity of their own society.

Pupils learn so successfully because teachers provide work that challenges each individual. Pupils are highly motivated and have a very good work ethic. Teachers use excellent strategies to engage pupils, help them to formulate their own ideas and to share these with others through pair and group work. Pupils enjoy learning and are always keen to attempt new challenges and ways of learning. This gives many lessons an air of excitement, with learning moving at a rapid pace. The school works very closely with a range of outside agencies to support pupils' learning and work is exceptionally well planned to meet every pupil's needs. This level of planning ensures that all pupils, including those who do not have English as their first language, are provided with high quality learning activities that are matched to individuals. Consequently, the vast majority make outstanding progress. Teachers' marking is excellent, so pupils know exactly what they have to do to make their work better. Pupils are very well supported in classes by very able teaching assistants and therefore pupils grow in confidence, and make excellent progress. Pupils are very competent with technology. They develop excellent skills and use them well in other subjects.

A very stimulating curriculum includes some excellent features that further enrich the curriculum and have been developed since the last inspection. The school environment supports learning

well. All classes have immediate access to an outdoor classroom area that enables teachers to plan stimulating activities that broaden pupils' learning experiences. Pupils have access to role-play areas in and out of classrooms across the school where they have many opportunities to very successfully develop their creativity and communication skills. The school has devised their own schemes of work for developing the basic skills including 'The Book of Numbers' to support learning in mathematics. This has enriched the teaching of mathematics and pupils' interest in applying mathematics to their everyday lives. The curriculum ensures that pupils' needs, interests and talents are very well served and, as a result, pupils achieve extremely well and their personal development is outstanding. The achievement of a number of nationally recognised curriculum awards reflects excellent art work, the school's commitment to sporting activities and the use of information and communication technology to support learning.

Pupils receive very high levels of care because rigorous systems and procedures to protect and safeguard them are in place and consistently well adhered to. Staff are very vigilant and well informed about protecting pupils. Pupils feel very safe in this very inclusive school, which takes outstanding action to ensure equality of opportunity. All pupils achieve very well due to the detailed knowledge and information that staff use to promote pupils' learning, and wherever possible making links with their families. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve exceptionally well due to strong adult support which is effectively focused as a result of high quality analysis of pupils' needs. A major strength of the school is the way it accurately and comprehensively tracks the progress of every pupil and supports their academic progress through excellent intensive support. Detailed and accurate assessment systems inform staff about the progress of every pupil ensuring that no pupil is left behind.

The acting headteacher has built on the existing strengths of the school's leadership team. He has been very effective in ensuring that staff are well supported in their new roles and used his previous experience in the school to ensure that the outstanding features of the school are sustained and developed further. Leaders rigorously monitor all aspects of the school's provision. Senior leaders and their teams analyse data on pupils' progress and observe pupils' learning. They measure the impact of actions taken on pupils' progress closely to ensure that it continues to improve. The school has distributed management responsibilities to staff and consequently all staff throughout the school work extremely well as a team to improve learning for all pupils. They pursue innovative ideas rigorously and are always looking to see how they can improve further. There is a sense that everyone has a role to play in new initiatives in the school. Standards in English have risen significantly due to the school's work on improving writing. In particular, a very individualised scheme of work developed by the school, 'The Holy Grail,' is very effective, and is consistently and rigorously followed by all staff. The school knows itself extremely well. Accurate knowledge of strengths and areas in need of improvement is used to produce focused action plans that are very relevant to the needs of the school. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It has carefully evaluated the needs of the local community and the extent to which it is able to contribute. Effective actions have been taken but the school knows it needs to develop pupils' global awareness further. Governance is strong and plays a full and active part in the school's strategic leadership. Governors challenge and support the work of the school to ensure it continues to provide an excellent education for its pupils. As a result, the school provides excellent value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with some outstanding features. Children start in the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning and by the time they leave the Reception class, they achieve below national expectations. Their progress in personal development and speech is particularly good due to the importance given to raising their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils experience a very effective range of planned activities and those initiated by the children themselves. Their outstanding personal development is promoted through carefully planned and focused activities such as talking in a group during 'circle time'. As a result, they know how to stay safe, eat healthily and the importance of learning about numbers and words for their future lives. However, there are times when some children are given activities for which they are not sufficiently prepared and therefore do not know what to do. Parents are very pleased with the information and guidance they receive, and the rate of their children's progress. Children soon learn to work together and understand the importance of sharing, and they behave exceptionally well. Children and adults enjoy outstanding relationships that ensure there is a feeling of security within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Regular assessments of children's progress and achievements are shared at weekly meetings so that planning accurately reflects children's needs. The excellent promotion of children's welfare is evident in the high levels of care shown for children's safety, the attention paid to ensuring very good levels of children's personal hygiene, and the promotion of healthy eating. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed; teaching and learning are regularly monitored so that areas for development can be accurately identified and appropriate action taken to bring about improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the range of opportunities for pupils to explore global issues.
- Ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage understand what they are learning in all activities.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	1
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**

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harrow Gate Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 8DE

Thank you so much for the really warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of your school. You helped me to see why you enjoy it so very much. You were all extremely keen to talk to me and answered all my questions very thoughtfully. I particularly enjoyed joining in the infant class assembly about Valentines Day and the rewards assembly. I was very impressed with just how much you know about keeping healthy and staying safe. All the adults care a great deal about you and keep a very close eye on just how well you are getting on. This is helping them to find out very quickly where you might be able to do even better. They give you lots of encouragement to do well and to grow in confidence. You are all very kind and caring, and your behaviour was really good all the time.

Your parents told me how pleased they are with your school. I agree with them. Your school is an outstanding school. The rate at which you learn is very fast and you reach higher standards at the end of Year 6 than pupils in many other schools. Even though the adults who work at your school know that you do really well in your learning, they are always looking to find out what else they can do to help you further.

To help you further, I have asked your school to:

- help you all learn more about the wider world
- help younger children understand their activities so they know what they are learning about.

Your obvious enthusiasm for learning suggests that you will play an important part in helping the school to keep on improving.

Yours sincerely

David Shearsmith

Lead inspector