

Homerswood Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117252
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326554
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Maria Coles

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)	203
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 Paul Whyatt
Headteacher	Mrs Samantha Sillito
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kirklands Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL8 7RF

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-size, one-form-entry school with part-time Nursery provision. The school population is principally of White British heritage with lower-than-average numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with a statement of special educational needs is in line with national averages. A number of these have specific difficulties such as dyslexia and autism.

There is on-site childcare provision for pre-school, breakfast and after-school clubs which are managed by private providers.

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 and improving school. The high quality, dedicated leadership of the headteacher and the governors have enabled this school to build on its past successes so that it has improved further since the previous inspection. They have the overwhelming support of the parents. One said, 'There is a strong feeling of community across the school. The staff are genuinely caring towards the children.' Another said that her daughter 'is always encouraged to achieve her full potential.' Pupils demonstrate positive patterns of behaviour and good attitudes to learning, which contribute well to their personal development. They enjoy school and get on well with their classmates and their teachers. They feel safe and know that the school will take care of them. They understand what contributes to a healthy lifestyle, including healthy eating and taking part in physical education and swimming lessons to keep them fit. Attendance has fallen in this academic year and is now below national figures. The result of this is that some children do not make as much progress as they could because they miss so much school.

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities which are below those expected for their age. They make good progress to achieve in line with standards expected nationally in most areas of Early Year's learning by the end of Reception. In Key Stage 1, they continue to consolidate this progress and achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 2. By the end of Year 6, progress has accelerated so that more pupils make good progress and reach standards that are broadly in line with national averages.

Teaching is good overall with some well planned and delivered lessons which enthuse and interest pupils. Where lessons challenge and interest the more able and support the less able appropriately, pupils make better progress. In lessons where this is lacking, pupils lose interest and their progress declines. The new approach to the curriculum is beginning to develop pupils' learning in themes which link subjects together. It provides a good overall approach which is well suited to the needs of pupils. It is complimented well by the good and extensive extra-curricular opportunities that include a variety of clubs and trips which enhance pupils' learning and are greatly valued by parents and pupils.

The school is successful in supporting all pupils and particularly those who are vulnerable, at risk or with specific learning needs such as dyslexia or autism. The school's good links with outside agencies, and the support they offer to these pupils, ensures that they make good progress. The school has a good overview of the progress pupils make through its well established tracking systems. Pupils know their targets and where they need to get to next. They do not always understand how they can do this through feedback given in lessons or through marking.

The school has become a valued part the local community and is used well at all times, including before and after school and during holidays. It demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their education because of the well-planned provision and consistently good teaching. They make good progress so that overall attainment at the end of the Reception Year is broadly in line with national expectations in most areas of learning. It is above expectations in linking sounds and letters and in children's personal and social development. The school is positively supporting summer-born children to ensure that they make equally good progress. The teachers and teaching assistants work extremely well together

and use their good knowledge of Early Years learning and development to plan work that meets the needs of each child in the class. Staff in both the Reception and Nursery classes provide a secure and interesting setting with an excellent range of resources to support indoor and outdoor learning. Teachers encourage the children to take responsibility and make decisions. Children are aware of healthy eating and there is good attention to their general welfare. The children develop good social skills, behave well and help each other to play happily together. There is a good balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities which help children to develop their skills and understanding. Teachers' detailed assessments are used well to match teaching activities to the full range of children's needs. There is regular liaison with parents who speak highly of the care and support for their children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching so that all lessons are consistently good or better.
- Ensure that teachers give pupils enough information through marking and during lessons so that they know exactly what they have to do to be successful and improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly in line with national expectations for the Early Years Foundation Stage at the end of the Reception Year. By the end of Year 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and standards are broadly average. Achievement is good by the end of Year 6. The unvalidated test results for 2008 demonstrate an improving picture over the last three years, with increasing numbers of pupils achieving at the higher Level 5. This is related to the improvement in teaching and the many interventions the school has put into place since the last inspection that benefit the higher ability pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as dyslexia and autism, make equally good progress in line with their peers due to the good provision the school provides. Early identification and careful matching of specific teaching to needs supports these pupils well in class, group and individual lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop good personal qualities because there is an extremely positive and caring atmosphere in the school. Most enjoy coming to school and speak enthusiastically about it. However, attendance is below average this year owing to a higher number of absences due to illnesses. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are sensitive towards the feelings of others, although they are not fully aware of the multicultural diversity of society. Pupils are generally well behaved and friendly. They respond well to the expectations of the school values and code. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy, both through eating sensibly and taking exercise. The pupils regularly raise money for charities such as Comic Relief and Children in Need. The older pupils welcome opportunities for responsibility such as acting as young leaders, 'buddies' for the younger pupils and peer mediators. The school council takes an active part in improvements such as the development of the playground pagoda and the building of the bicycle shelter. Pupils' basic skills and ability to work with others are developing satisfactorily. As a result, they are adequately prepared for their secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Thorough planning and a careful match of activities to pupils' needs are key features of many of the good lessons seen during the inspection. In these lessons there is a sense of enjoyment and enthusiasm by the pupils. They are keen to learn and relish tackling challenging work tasks. Where lessons lack the ability to motivate pupils their attention wanders and their progress slows down. The use of self-assessment for pupils is in the early stages of development and is not consistently used in all classes to enable pupils to become independent in their own assessment and evaluation of progress. Teaching of small groups by teaching assistants is well focused and delivered so that pupils can make good progress in line with their peers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The new topic-based approach ensures that pupils' learning is made more meaningful and enjoyable. The school's plans to extend its community cohesion to take in a wider national and global perspective are inherent in its development of the curriculum, although this is still in the early stages. An appropriate focus is given to improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There are many opportunities for pupils to improve their information and communication technology skills in the new computer suite. The curriculum is further enriched by visits to local places of interest such as Hatfield House and St Alban's Verulanium Museum. Older pupils take part in residential visits where they learn about a contrasting environment and develop well their personal skills such as teamwork and cooperation. Extra-curricular provision is good. There is a wide range of clubs and activities taking place including football, netball, art, gardening and the eco-club, which enrich the experiences of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The inclusive nature of the school provides a welcoming and caring environment for all pupils, who are encouraged to develop their self-confidence and enjoy learning. The school is particularly successful in supporting children who find learning difficult as well as those with social and emotional problems. There are excellent links with outside agencies and children who are at risk are very well supported. Procedures for child protection and measures to ensure the health and safety of pupils are fully in place and rigorously implemented. Monitoring of absences is rigorous, although attendance is below the national average. Transition arrangements from pre-school and to secondary school are well planned. The school is effectively using assessment information across all classes to track individual pupils' progress. There are systems in place to provide good quality intervention support for pupils who require additional help with their work. All pupils have personal targets in reading, writing and mathematics, although the teachers are not fully involving the pupils in assessing their own progress. Marking is regular and supportive but it is inconsistent across the school in informing pupils what they have to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good and purposeful leadership. She understands her school well and is highly effective in driving school improvement forward. Parents appreciate her calm and efficient manner and value the approachability of the staff. There is now a cohesive school team who all work together well. Leaders at other levels have developed their roles well and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas. They have been proactive in putting into place initiatives such as the promotion of mental strategies in mathematics and the launch of a project to improve pupils' writing. Their roles in monitoring the impact of their actions on pupils' progress are less well developed. The governing body support the school well and use the expertise of its members to aid its work whenever possible.

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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 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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	3
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?	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?	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?	2

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?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Homerswood Primary and Nursery School, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7RF

Thank you for making us feel so welcome during our recent visit. We think your school is a good school and that it has improved since its previous inspection. We were impressed with the improvements in your work and the results you now get in your end of year tests. We thought your positive attitudes to learning and your pride in your school really help you to do well. We liked the way you all took care of each other and how well older pupils took their responsibilities seriously.

There are a few things we think could be done to improve things further.

- We'd like your teachers to make sure all their lessons are good most of the time.
- We'd like them to give you more advice on how you can improve your work through their marking and what they tell you during lessons.

We would like you to help too by making sure that you attend school every day so that you do not fall behind in your work.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Maria Coles

Lead inspector