

Hardy Mill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105189
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336443
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Cowburn
Headteacher	Miss C Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who visited 17 lessons or parts of lessons. The inspectors observed eight teachers and held discussions with governors, staff, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, records of meetings, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 120 responses to parents' and carers' questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of action taken to raise standards in writing and mathematics
- the way in which the school has worked to modify the curriculum to place more emphasis on the creative arts, especially drama
- how successfully the school's focus on developing partnerships with other providers has impacted on pupils' learning and development.

Information about the school

This below- average- size school has gained a number of awards, including the Activemark, and has achieved Healthy School status. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. Most pupils are White British. Extensive building work during the inspection meant that the children in the Nursery were taught in a different part of the school than usual.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has some outstanding features, which include the effectiveness of the safeguarding procedures and the care guidance and support provided for pupils. The headteacher leads by example, being calm, well-organised and resolutely focused on furthering school improvement. Staff morale is high and a shared vision for taking the school forward is evident. Leaders have overseen a range of improvements since the last inspection. These include the more focused tracking of individual pupils' progress, raising the number of pupils attaining the higher levels across the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 and developing closer partnerships with other institutions to support pupils' learning and development. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because self-evaluation is accurate. This enables them to plan effectively what the school needs to do to improve further and successfully sustain improvements. As a result, the capacity for further improvement is good.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 continue to achieve well and, by the time they leave, attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Action taken to raise standards in writing and mathematics has been successful. Pupils have improved their skills in constructing sentences with accurate vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Their written presentation is good. In mathematics, they have improved their quick mental recall skills and their ability to calculate using all four rules of number. Leaders are not complacent and know there is still more to do to raise standards further. They rightly acknowledge that pupils understand the different styles of writing, including narrative, letter and instructional writing, but are not adept at choosing for themselves the most appropriate style to express their ideas. In mathematics, the school is exploring ways of improving pupils' ability to apply their calculation skills to solve number problems in different contexts.

The school is a welcoming and friendly setting in which to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is exemplary, which makes a positive contribution to the progress they make. Their adoption of a healthy lifestyle and understanding of how to stay safe are outstanding. Leaders rightly acknowledge the need to develop curricular planning to enable pupils to make even better use of skills gained in one subject to support learning in others. Teaching has many strengths, but does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves. The care and well-being of pupils is at the heart of the school's work and this is much appreciated by parents and carers.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on pupils' good achievement, by :
 - challenging them to select for themselves the most appropriate style of writing to express their ideas across the curriculum
 - improving pupils' ability in applying their mathematical calculation skills to solve real-life number problems in different contexts
 - extending pupils' thinking skills by giving them more opportunities to explore ideas for themselves.
- Develop curricular planning to enable pupils to make even better use of skills gained in one subject to support learning in others.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils show interest in their work and are keen to learn. They work well together in pairs and small groups and particularly enjoy practical activities. This was evident in a science lesson for pupils in Year 3, in which they were investigating how shadows are formed. Pupils are articulate and speak confidently in groups and class discussions. Their reading skills are above average and they write interesting stories using accurate sentence structures. Pupils have secure mathematical calculation skills but are less adept at using these to solve real-life number problems. Their scientific investigational skills are well developed and they use information and communication technology confidently in a variety of contexts. There is no significant difference between the achievement, nor the quality of learning, of different groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because of the well-targeted extra support they receive.

Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and show interest in the feelings and ideas of others. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council, and in so doing, contribute to the life of the school. In the wider community, pupils raise funds for local charities and the choir sings at a variety of local events. Pupils have a good awareness of the traditions and beliefs of cultures different to their own. They say they feel very safe in and around school and on visits. Pupils' above average attendance and the way that they are making good progress in gaining basic skills, means they are well prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Adults promote good relationships, which leads to classrooms being friendly and calm places in which to learn. Pupils show interest in their work and are fully engaged in activities. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to build on previous work. This enables pupils to use what they already know and understand to support their current learning. Good planning ensures groups of different ability are given work that challenges them effectively. Pupils say they enjoy lessons because they are interesting and fun. Consequently, they make good progress and achieve well. At times, teaching is too directed and this limits the opportunities for pupils to explore ideas for themselves to develop their thinking skills. Teachers use marking and discussion well to show pupils how they might improve their work. Teaching assistants skilfully support pupils' learning, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school has worked successfully to modify the curriculum to better develop pupils' creative skills. This is exemplified by the displays of good quality art throughout the school and the high quality drama productions observed during the inspection. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, music and drama clubs, enrich the curriculum. Visits to places of educational interest, including Bolton Museum to learn about the Ancient Egyptians, and opportunities to work with a variety of visitors, extend pupils' skills and widen their horizons. The school's commitment to providing a variety of good quality sporting experiences and to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles is reflected in it gaining the Activemark and Healthy School status. The opportunity for pupils in Years 5 and 6 to take part in residential stays in Llandudno and Ross-on-Wye contributes well to their personal and social development.

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The school provides a very safe and welcoming learning environment. Staff are very clear about the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about the well-being of a pupil. The support for potentially vulnerable pupils is an established part of the school's provision and plays an important role in promoting their learning and development. Good links with outside agencies, including the educational psychologist, ensure extra support for individual pupils is readily available, if required. Transition arrangements are excellent throughout the school and onto secondary school, and contribute very well to pupils' development. The school gives pupils very clear guidance on matters relating to their personal health and safety.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders establish ambition and drive improvement well by focusing the school on the right priorities. They motivate staff by communicating high expectations about securing improvement. As a result, teaching is at least good and leaders at all levels are taking effective steps to drive up its quality still further. The school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination well. Leaders have detailed information about individual pupils and regularly check their performance and their contribution to school life. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are fully involved in evaluating its performance and influencing its development. There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among governors and staff at all levels. The school very effectively integrates issues about safety and safeguarding into the curriculum so that pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Leaders promote community cohesion well in school and this leads to it being a harmonious community, with pupils from different backgrounds getting on well together. There is good engagement with a range of community groups beyond the school and its immediate community. The school is highly committed to working in partnership with others, including the School Sports partnership. As a result, pupils' learning and development are enhanced, for example, in music and sport, in ways that the school could not provide on its own. The school has a good relationship with parents and carers who receive frequent information about their children's progress.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children have skills on entry that are generally typical for their age and make good progress and achieve well because teaching and learning are good. In the Nursery and Reception classes, adults work well as a team and provide activities that are interesting, practical and often based on children's own experiences. This was evident in a session in the nursery in which children were making a zoo using building blocks and model animals. They are encouraged to make decisions for themselves and this contributes positively to their development as independent learners. Children have secure calculation skills but are less confident in solving number problems. The balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children is good, which contributes positively to their development as independent learners. The curriculum is enhanced by an interesting range of enrichment activities, such as seasonal walks around the school grounds and visits to places such as a local farm. Adults closely check the progress that children make. Children's welfare is promoted very well and the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Good leadership has ensured that the move to a different area of the school has not adversely affected children's learning or development. Parents and carers say that staff are approachable and keep them informed of their child's progress and how they can support learning at home.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over 50% of parents and carers completed questionnaires. The very large majority of these were positive about the school's work and the efforts of all staff. Two comments were typical of many, 'The school is very supportive of children and will take time to listen to parents.' and 'Both our children have been very happy at Hardy Mill, where all staff work hard to meet their needs.' A very small minority of parents and carers did not agree that the school informed them of their children's progress nor took account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspection evidence does not support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hardy Mill Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 120 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	85	71	32	27	1	1	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	88	73	30	25	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	33	69	58	10	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	44	57	48	6	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	54	50	42	4	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	48	55	46	5	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	48	62	52	0	0	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	57	48	53	44	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	41	65	54	4	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	43	58	48	8	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	33	67	56	8	7	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	63	53	52	43	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	58	46	38	2	2	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hardy Mill Primary School, Bolton, BL2 3QJ

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the many interesting things you do.

The inspectors judge that:

- you go to a good school that helps you to achieve well
- the curriculum develops your creativity well, such as through drama
- adults look after you very well and make sure you are safe
- the wide range of extra-curricular activities are well attended
- your behaviour, the extent to which you feel safe and the way you are adopting healthy lifestyles, are outstanding
- in your questionnaires, you say you enjoy school and learn a lot in lessons
- the headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to help you do even better.

What we have asked your school to do now is to:

- build on your good achievement by challenging you to choose for yourselves the best style of writing to express your ideas, improving your mathematical problem-solving skills and providing more opportunities for you to explore ideas for yourselves
- make better links between subjects so you can use skills gained in one subject to support your learning in another.

All of you are a credit to your school and can help it improve further by continuing to try your best in your activities.

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector

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