

# Harlington Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109511
<b>Local Authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	337307
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Sudworth

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	129
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs C Munns
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs D Shelvey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Westoning Road Harlington Dunstable
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. One was present for half a day to focus on safeguarding. Inspectors visited nine lessons and five teachers were seen. They observed learning for about two-fifths of the school days. They held meetings with the chair and vice-chair of governors, the headteacher, other staff representatives and a group of pupils. They looked at a range of documentation, for example that relating to safeguarding, curriculum organisation and information to track pupils' progress and also looked at samples of their work. Staff and pupil, and 64 parent questionnaire responses were analysed. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

the consistency of pupils' progress across the school

- girls' confidence in mathematics compared to the boys
- what the school had done to address a relative weakness in writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage compared to other aspects of their learning.

## Information about the school

The school is below average in size with five classes including the Reception class. The pupils join the Reception class in the September preceding their fifth birthday. Nearly all the children have been to a pre-school before admission. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average as is the proportions of pupils from ethnic minorities and those who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than that usually seen; all these pupils have learning difficulties. The headteacher is new and has just commenced her second term at the school. A job share arrangement operates in the Reception class and includes a temporary member of staff at the present time due to a maternity leave.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This is an outstanding school. It is a very happy place of learning with excellent facilities and a very dedicated staff. It enjoys the wholehearted support of its parents who are made very welcome. They justifiably have great confidence in the staff and are thrilled with their children's education. One parent wrote, echoing the responses and comments of the vast majority of parents and carers, 'We count ourselves lucky that our daughter goes to a school with excellent educational and moral values.'

The pupils have consistently made excellent progress for a number of years in different phases of the school and reached well above average standards. There is every sign of this continuing under the new leadership. Girls and boys attain equally well in all aspects of their learning. The pupils express great enthusiasm for the school and enjoyment of all that they do. They develop exceptionally well as young people and are very well prepared for their future education. They feel very safe and have an outstanding appreciation of healthy living. The pupils contribute extremely well to the school community and engage very well in local events, which contribute very significantly to their mature outlook and relationships with others.

Staff take excellent care of the pupils and enjoy very respectful relationships with them. The pupils respond very well in class and show great enthusiasm in their lessons and in the extra activities that take place. The outstanding curriculum develops both pupils' academic and social skills very effectively, and coupled with good and sometimes outstanding teaching ensures that the pupils' learning and progress are excellent. Teachers track this progress regularly and ensure lessons are closely targeted to pupils' needs. They share targets for writing with the pupils, but this does not yet extend well enough to mathematics. Targets are not always clear enough to tell pupils what they need to know to get to the next stage in their learning.

The governing body takes a keen interest in the school, is very involved and maintains a good oversight through governors' regular visits and meetings. It usually fulfils its duties exceptionally well but it has not reviewed the provision for community cohesion as comprehensively as it might. This limits the use of plans for its future development. Nevertheless, there is some very good practice in the school which contributes effectively to the pupils' broader education in appreciating different cultures. Other than in this one aspect, self-evaluation is extremely effective. Sophisticated and wide-ranging monitoring systems ensure that school leaders at a range of levels have a very clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. As a result performance has been exceptional over a period of time, and the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Audit the full provision for community cohesion and develop an action plan based on this.
  - Extend pupils' target setting to include mathematics and share the criteria for their future learning in child friendly language so they can assess their own further development.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Girls are as confident as boys and both groups demonstrate excellent achievement. Pupils of different abilities and different language backgrounds make similar progress. Pupils have consistently attained well above average results by the end of Year 4 in all key areas of their learning in recent years. Learning in the classroom is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils have good skills in information and communications technology (ICT) because they have good opportunities to use computers and other equipment. Year 4 pupils used computers to write a space story in the form of a newspaper article and formatted the page with the inclusion of a picture. The selective use of computer programmes also extends their work in different subjects and develops their enquiry skills very effectively. Skilful teaching often helps to develop pupils' reasoning skills. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson about three figure place value, pupils made good progress in understanding the positional value of the numbers. Furthermore, the teacher's approach also developed their general thinking skills by getting the pupils to think through the different combinations of the three digits. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills because of the many opportunities to think through their views and give their opinions about different aspects of their work. In the introduction to 'cinquains', a form of poetry, Year 4 pupils studied some good examples and responded sensitively with their feelings about them before writing their own poem in this style. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning, shown in their excellent attendance and good behaviour. A parent's comment, typical of others, indicates this. She writes, 'My children go into school happy and come home happy, brimming with information and facts about their school day.' Pupils take on responsibilities willingly and undertake them conscientiously. School council members spoke about the school rules to which they had contributed in assembly and discussed these with the other pupils. The pupils raise large amounts of money for charities, sometimes through their own ideas and also contribute gifts and their school uniforms to a school in Kenya. Letters seen from elderly residents in the village show how much they appreciate the distribution of harvest gifts and the calendars and cards at Christmas and also the visits the pupils make to perform parts of their productions. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of keeping themselves safe, such as safety in using medicines.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

The staff's excellent relationships with pupils combined with effective learning environments enable the pupils to thrive in their learning. Lesson planning is thorough. Marking is up-to-date and often very helpful, although staff do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' handwriting. Staff make very good use of resources and modern technology to present lessons. They use helpful strategies to assist pupils' learning. In Year 2, pupils were asked to draw a story map as a prelude to writing a story and this helped them to write sequentially and to make use of a variety of words to connect sentences. Teaching assistants have good skills and are well deployed. They contribute especially well in ICT.

The school provides a rich and well structured curriculum with a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The excellent provision for ICT and music supports and extends pupils' range of skills very well. Visits to places of interest support the curriculum most effectively. For example, younger pupils visited the local woods and looked at the shapes and patterns around them, which supported their creativity and appreciation of the natural world. Visitors, too, make a make a great contribution to pupils' learning. Parents share their skills in pottery, yoga and gardening for example and so widen pupils' interests. Residential visits at home and abroad not only support pupils' physical skills and their French vocabulary respectively, but contribute very significantly to their mature social skills. The curriculum is customised to meet pupils'

<sup>1</sup> 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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interests. Pupils pose questions to which they would like to find answers related to their study themes. Personal, social and health education is an excellent feature of the curriculum. Education about different values is a major thrust and supports pupils' appreciation and care of one another. The excellent general pastoral care of the pupils strongly supports pupils' emotional development and feelings of security. Strong links with local churches contribute to the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Effective use of specialist professional agencies supports pupils with specific difficulties and ensures that all pupils get the help that they need.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body is very well organised and governors have a good range of skills which are utilised well in the various committees and in the different roles they fulfil. The strategic plan shows a keen commitment to continuing the school's development and maintaining the high standards that the pupils reach. The whole school development plan is extremely well focused, providing a transparent programme for the immediate future. Planning for community cohesion is not at the same level, even though developments are clearly taking place. The systems for ensuring the pupils' safety are very secure. Effective procedures are in place for child protection. There are several first-aiders on site available to attend to pupils' needs. Health and safety inspections are regular. The school has a deficit budget, partly as a result of falling rolls, and it is working effectively to balance the finances within an agreed time scale.

The school gives excellent attention to equal opportunities. It is a strongly inclusive school providing very well for pupils with disabilities. It works successfully to avoid any discrimination. The maintenance of well above average standards and pupils' very good progress over several years is testimony to the way that the school has driven improvement forward and embedded ambition. It has excellent arrangements to oversee the quality of teaching and learning which has helped maintain consistency and the high regard in which the school is held both among parents and carers and within the community. This is reflected in some outstanding teaching seen in key areas of the school. Links and communication with parents and carers are excellent and justifiably parents and carers have every confidence in the school. Their partnership with the school not only enhances the provision of resources but their participation in the enjoyable activities provided for their children's homework gives them a great sense of

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fun in learning as well.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The children's attainment on entry is at an expected level for their age. A well planned curriculum and good leadership and teaching enable the children to make good progress. A past weaker performance in writing has been tackled effectively. The children now reach above average standards by the end of the Reception year in all aspects of their learning. Several unavoidable changes of staff have interrupted the flow of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage. During the inspection the children did not always have enough opportunities to initiate their own learning because a greater part was spent in whole group sessions. Nevertheless, good attention is paid to the basic skills and the children acquire a good grounding in early number and literacy skills. When the children work on their own they show good social skills and independence and co-operate well with other children. The children derived great enjoyment from working in the role play corner which was imaginatively turned into a Kenyan village hut. They loved putting on African dress and they gained a good perception of Kenyan village life through the various activities. The children showed great interest in learning about the travels of 'Derek the dinosaur' to Kenya and receiving e-mails about 'his' experiences. Continuous assessments of the children's learning ensure that the staff have a clear perception of the children's developments. They use this information very accurately to build up the children's learning further. Their progress is tracked very well and they are well cared for.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Parents and carers' views are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Written comments record that new children have settled quickly and are making good progress. Homework is reported to be just right and well explained. The values that the school concentrates on are commented on very favourably as are the themes that the pupils study in their work. The positive relationships that parents and carers have with the staff are much appreciated. A few less positive comments came from individual parents and carers, but views expressed were not shared by any others, nor upheld by the team.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harlington Lower 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 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 129 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	61	23	36	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	49	77	14	22	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	50	28	44	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	52	28	44	2	3	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	63	22	34	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	58	24	38	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	56	28	44	0	0	0	0
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)	39	61	17	27	1	2	7	11
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	52	28	44	2	3	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	39	33	52	3	5	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	42	34	53	1	2	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	40	63	22	34	0	0	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	66	20	31	0	0	2	3

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



20 January 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Harlington Lower School, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 6PD

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school, for sharing your work with us and talking to us about what you do. We were very impressed with what we saw. You make excellent progress in your lessons and reach a high standard in your work for your age. The staff work very hard and also take excellent care of you. You attend an excellent school. Your parents are so pleased that you attend Harlington Lower School and now that we have seen what you do, we understand why. We were impressed with your interest in your lessons and the way in which you do your homework which the teachers make so interesting for you. Your parents work hard for the school and help in lots of ways.

We have just two recommendations to make for the school's further improvement at this time. First, the school should look carefully at what it does to make sure that you have a good understanding of the different people that are in the world and in this country. Secondly the teachers should give you targets in mathematics as they already do in writing and help you to understand how you can get to the next stage in your learning. You can help by making sure you know and use your targets.

Thank you once again for your help. We hope that you will continue to work hard and do your best. We wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector

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