

Highwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117089
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338946
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Maxine Clewlow

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	460
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Vincent Turner
Headteacher	Mrs Poula Budge
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, its improvement plans, reports on the school's work, governing body minutes and records of pupils' progress. They took account of parents' views through formal and informal meetings and the analysis of the responses to 138 questionnaires. The views of staff and pupils were also gathered through questionnaires.

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

- The achievement of different groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to determine the effectiveness and impact of teaching on their progress.
- The quality of English teaching, particularly the opportunities for writing across the curriculum, to determine what impact this has on pupils' writing.
- The impact of assessment in the classroom and the use of marking to inform pupils about how they can improve.
- The quality of the school's leadership and management and its capacity to deliver improvements.

Information about the school

The School is above average in size and is situated on the outskirts of Watford. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. One fifth of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, although only a few use English as an additional language. The school has a Primary Support Base which provides education for up to six pupils with specific special educational needs. The school makes provision for its Early Years Foundation Stage in its Nursery and Reception classes. There is a supervised morning breakfast club before school begins. There are plans for the school buildings to be replaced by a new build beginning in 2010.

The school has attained the Healthy Schools' Standard, Investors in people, Eco Bronze Award and Activemark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Highwood Primary School provides a satisfactory education overall but it has a number of strengths, of which it is justifiably proud. For example, the consistently good teaching throughout the school has contributed to the above average attainment of pupils. In lessons pupils respond positively to this effective teaching by taking part actively and showing an enthusiasm for learning. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of the careful matching of work to their needs and the high quality support given by teaching assistants. Good leadership of the provision for these pupils has led to consistency. As a result, these pupils make good progress and are enthusiastic about the support they receive. All pupils benefit from a well-organised and interesting curriculum which provides a rich variety of opportunities.

Although pupils are cared for well on a day to day basis, procedures to ensure that all policies are reviewed regularly are not sufficiently robust. As a result, policies for behaviour, including anti-bullying, and the management of racist incidents lack clarity. The governing body is not fully involved in monitoring these aspects of the school's work. This is having a direct impact upon how pupils feel about their safety, how a small minority of the pupils behave and the quality of relationships between the school and its community. While the school has developed positive partnerships with parents and its community, it is yet to fulfil its duties with regard to community cohesion. The school has not planned or evaluated its contribution to the local or wider community.

The leadership of the headteacher and senior team is clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising attainment. The school has successfully achieved this and, as a result, pupils enjoy learning and they are making good progress. Children make a very positive start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the end of Key Stage 1 they are attaining well. This above average attainment is yet to be reflected in assessments at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 6 are currently making at least good progress and are on target to attain above average standards.

The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The leadership have addressed recommendations from the previous inspection with success and there is improvement to both teaching and levels of attainment. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a new team has effectively and quickly developed good quality provision. In literacy the leader has successfully implemented the 'Big Writing' project across the school. However, evaluation of other aspects of school work, while broadly accurate, lack detail.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that the school fulfils its duty to promote community cohesion by:
 - undertaking an analysis of the school's religious, ethnic and socio-economic context
 - evaluating the impact of its current range of activities and opportunities which support community cohesion
 - using analysis and evaluation, develop plans which will promote community cohesion within its local community and beyond.
- Improve partnerships and engagement with parents by:
 - raising the awareness of why the school takes certain actions
 - involving parents in the reviewing of policies, in particular relating to behaviour management, racist incidents and anti-bullying
 - developing clear systems for communicating information to parents through a variety of media
 - developing the role of governors to be more accessible to the parent community.
- Improve the procedures and policies for behaviour management, anti-bullying and reporting racist incidents so that pupils feel safe and the rare incidents of inappropriate behaviour can be monitored and tackled effectively by the school.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy school and apply themselves enthusiastically to their learning. Pupils enjoy each others' company and cooperate well together in the classroom and around the school. Most pupils feel safe at school. Although pupils behave well in lessons, there are occasional incidents of inappropriate behaviour around the school. A school council survey and discussions with pupils indicated that this is an area for improvement and they are correct

In the lessons observed pupils were making good progress and were reaching the challenging targets that had been set for them. With the recent improvements to teaching, attainment in English and mathematics is rising sharply. Observation of pupil's current work in Key Stage 2 is already showing that there is improvement to writing and in Year 6 this is of a high quality. The 'Big Writing' project has enthused pupils, particularly boys. They find writing exciting and one commented, 'Literacy is brilliant because I can be more creative'.

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy getting involved with activities which make a positive contribution to their school and community. For example, pupils speak enthusiastically about their Eco-council and how they feel they can make a difference to the environment. The school's promotion of healthy lifestyles is effective and pupils are

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active at lunchtimes and after school, participating in a variety of sporting opportunities. The breakfast club before school supports children well and prepares them for school so that they feel safe, cared for and eager to start the school day.

Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Opportunities to promote spirituality are taken, not only in assemblies but through unusual approaches in teaching. For example, in a 'Big write' session in Year 6, the use of fragrant candles and peaceful music created a spiritual and moving atmosphere. As a result, pupils enjoyed their work, were inspired and produced high quality writing.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Overall the quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection were good with some outstanding practice. Positive relationships created a focused learning culture and, in the most effective lessons, teachers used innovative and exciting resources to engage their pupils. For example, learning fractions in Year 2 was made exciting simply by giving each pair of pupils a real bar of chocolate to use for their investigations.

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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Excellent planning, consistent strategies and a lively pace support pupils in their learning. The strong focus upon writing throughout the school has brought about high quality marking with pupils given a clear indication as to how to improve. However, this good practice is not consistent across all areas of the curriculum.

In lessons teachers and teaching assistants skilfully support pupils with their learning by asking focused questions and by using a range of resources for information and communication technology. Where teaching is less effective pupils spend too long listening and the pace, during questioning sessions, is too slow. The provision for pupils in the Primary Support Base is good, enabling them to integrate successfully with the whole school where it is appropriate. The base gives them the individual support they need to make good progress in their learning, personal development and well-being. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the good support given to them by teaching assistants. Individual education plans are used effectively to support most of these pupils. However, the school is aware that sometimes targets in these plans need to be more precise to meet the specific needs of each child.

The curriculum is planned well to meet the individual needs of the pupils. There is a strong emphasis upon developing basic skills and information communication technology. Detailed planning ensures consistency across the whole school. Learning is supported and enriched by a variety of curriculum opportunities in school and as extra-curricular activities. Trips and visitors bring lessons to life and add enjoyment to the learning experience.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive to improve teaching and learning is proving successful. The schools' leadership is motivated and focused with a strong sense of teamwork to improve subject development and raise standards. As a result, teaching is good with some outstanding practice and this is having a direct impact upon pupils' learning. Senior leaders manage and monitor their subjects well based upon informative assessments. They use this information to set challenging whole school targets. Monitoring and evaluation of other aspects of the school's work is not sufficiently robust to enable the leaders and managers to prepare clear plans for improvement. Consequently, the senior leaders do not always focus sharply upon the key priorities.

The curriculum provides equal opportunities for all pupils so that each one is supported

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to access meaningful learning experiences, both in school and as part of the extended provision. Senior leaders work well within partnerships, in particular the development of extended services.

The governing body works hard to support and challenge senior leadership. They recognise that they need to take greater responsibility for ensuring that the school is meeting its statutory requirements fully by planning and evaluating the impact of its actions to promote community cohesion. While safeguarding arrangements are secure the governing body does not routinely monitor and evaluate procedures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge which are in line with expectations. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage their level of attainment is above expectations particularly in the areas of communication, reading and writing. They settle quickly and make good progress so that when they enter Year 1 they are confident and prepared well for their next stage of learning. Good quality teaching promotes a variety of well-planned learning opportunities both indoors and outside. The Nursery and Reception areas are organised well and provide an attractive and exciting range of experiences which engage the children. As a result, behaviour is good. Children work and play well on their own and in groups. They are motivated by the welcoming and stimulating learning environment to concentrate for long periods on tasks and activities. Writing is actively promoted by giving creative opportunities for children to write for meaning in role-play areas. The Early Years Foundation stage is led well and the newly established team have a clear vision of what needs to be done next. They have

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successfully developed good quality provision in a short period of time. Partnerships with parents and carers are developing through home visits to involve parents more in their children's learning.

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

A large majority of parents were positive about their child's experience at Highwood Primary School. Almost all parents say that their child enjoys school and most agree that the school is led and managed effectively. A small minority of parents did express a variety of concerns through written comments on the questionnaires. Inspectors considered all of the comments and their findings are contained with this report. Inspectors agree with the significant proportion of parents who expressed concerns that communication between the school and parents is not effective enough.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highwood 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 138 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 460 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	52	61	46	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	67	50	60	45	4	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	31	71	53	17	13	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	36	72	54	9	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	64	48	61	46	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	40	62	46	12	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	42	71	53	4	3	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)	39	29	72	54	9	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	34	69	51	10	7	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	31	62	46	16	12	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	25	73	54	11	8	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	52	39	63	47	11	8	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	48	57	43	9	7	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 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">■ 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.



2 December 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Highwood Primary School, Bushey, WD23 2AW

If you remember I came with my colleagues to inspect the work of the school and to check how well you were doing. Thank you for the help you gave us, we felt very welcome. We enjoyed meeting you and thought you were very friendly and polite. We were impressed by how enthusiastic you were about your learning and how well you are doing in your lessons. The good teaching is helping you learn and you are working hard to be independent learners. You take part in many interesting activities and clubs which you told us that you thoroughly enjoy. We think that you take your responsibilities to the school and to the wider community seriously and your contribution is valued. We know that some of you are worried about how to keep safe and what to do when behaviour is not acceptable. We are happy that the school does keep you safe.

Your headteacher and all of the staff are working hard to improve your education and how you are cared for. Taking everything into account, we decided that yours is a satisfactory school.

To make things even better, we have asked the school to do the following.

Find out more about your school community so that you can plan activities which will include everyone and so that your school can play its part within the local community and wider world.

Make sure your parents and the senior staff work closely together when making decisions about your education.

Help you to understand how to keep safe and make sure you know who to tell if you are worried.

I am sure that you will all do what you can to help the adults that work with you make your school better. You can play your part by trying as hard as you can in all you do.

Yours faithfully

Maxine Clewlow

Additional Inspector

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