

Hilmarton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126198
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340939
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Henly
Headteacher	Sam Churchill
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They also talked to some parents who were present at the start and finish of the school day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plan, data on pupils' progress, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and a range of school policies. They also analysed questionnaires received from 43 parents and 59 pupils.

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

- Pupils' attainment and the progress they make as they move up through the school.
- How well the teaching takes account of the needs of groups and individuals.
- How well teachers check the progress of different groups of pupils and inform them about what they need to do to improve their work.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in bringing about improvements in the outcomes for all pupils.

Information about the school

Hilmarton is much smaller in size than most other primary schools. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are very few pupils at the early stages of learning English and the number eligible for free school meals is very low. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs, mainly specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), is similar to other schools nationally as is the number of pupils with statements. There is one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2009.

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

Hilmarton is a warm and friendly school that provides a good, all-round education for its pupils. The very caring ethos and close attention paid to the welfare of pupils results in them feeling safe and confident to take full advantage of the good quality learning experiences. As one pupil said, 'We are one big family here.' The school has undergone a period of turbulence in its leadership which has interrupted the school's steady improvement. The previous headteacher left in July 2008 and then the school had a team of 3 acting headteachers working together until the present headteacher took up post January 2009. She is providing strong and clear-sighted leadership and communicates her ambitions for the school persuasively. Consequently, the school has regained its momentum for improvement.

Pupils reach standards that are consistently well-above average, although there is some fluctuation in standards year on year, reflecting the school's very small cohorts. In relation to their starting points, all groups of pupils make good progress, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. There is, however, some variability in attainment and progress in the core subjects. Standards are higher in English and science than in mathematics, where the rate of improvement has been slower.

Good teaching enables pupils to enjoy successful learning in a stimulating, productive environment. Lessons are typified by enthusiasm, enjoyment, engagement and exemplary behaviour. Consequently, pupils are very well motivated, come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. Teachers mark books and set targets for improvement carefully and regularly. As a result, the advice teachers give to pupils as to how to improve their work is very effective and most pupils are clear as to the next steps in their learning. In a minority of lessons, learning is held back because teachers do not always ensure that pupils are given sufficient time to work independently and to talk about their findings. Sometimes, tasks set in lessons do not provide maximum challenge for all pupils, particularly the high-flyers.

Pupils are happy in this caring school. Parents are very supportive, and even those who have some criticisms recognise that their children love coming to school. As a result, attendance is above average, pupils relish their learning and are eager to participate in all activities. Pupils work and play well together but their awareness of different ways of life in the diverse society in which they live is not developed well enough.

While overcautious in a few respects, the school's self-evaluation is accurate. This, together with its maintenance of high standards and good personal development and recent action by leaders to ensure even better teaching, means its capacity for sustained improvement is good.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress in mathematics in all years so that it matches that achieved in English by:
 - giving more opportunities for pupils to develop their problem solving skills
 - making sure that at the end of each mathematics lesson, pupils have a clear idea of what they have learnt, whether they have fulfilled their personal objectives and what they need to do to improve them further.
- Build on current good practice to further improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better in the overwhelming majority of lessons in all year groups by:
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class
 - making sure that there is a sharper match of work to pupils' different abilities.
- Extend pupils' awareness and understanding of different cultures and ways of life by:
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand experience of culturally diverse communities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The work seen by inspectors in lessons confirms the overall picture of good and improving progress, with pupils working at levels above those expected for their age throughout the school. Sustained challenge and high expectations enable pupils, from an average baseline, and in the case of language skills below average, to make good progress and achieve above average standards overall. Attainment in English and science is well-above average and is getting better year on year at a very fast pace. In an outstanding literacy lesson in Year 5/6, pupils were seen by inspectors to be learning at an exceptional pace because of the teacher's immensely high expectations and challenging tasks. Standards in mathematics, although above average, are not improving so quickly. This is because some teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to talk about what they have learnt and what they need to do to improve further. Detailed plans to support pupils with special educational needs, coupled with thoughtful deployment of learning assistants and timely interventions, ensure that they make similar progress to that of their classmates.

Pupils greatly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop very positive attitudes to learning. Many enthusiastically and knowledgeably explain the value of adopting healthy lifestyles and the need for exercise although some bring snacks and lunches that do not fully reflect a healthy diet. Their very well-developed understanding of right and wrong and appreciation and enjoyment of the wonders of life around them are reflected in their exemplary behaviour. Pupils have an excellent understanding for their age of how to be safe in the community. They eagerly take advantage of the many opportunities to

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participate in the community and are very well informed about other people's needs, particularly due to the school's links with a similar school in India. However, their awareness of different ways of life in other communities is not developed well enough. Pupils develop impressive social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. This, together with above average standards in the key skills of mathematics and English, means that they are well prepared for the next stages of their lives.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning was seen to be good or better in over 75% of lessons and 33% of all lessons were outstanding. Typically, lessons are fast paced and fun. Teaching is lively, tasks and concepts are clearly explained, and activities are carefully designed to challenge the pupils to learn at a swift pace. Adults ask perceptive questions and these help pupils to think and use more varied vocabulary in their answers. Effective use of 'talking partners', drama, role play and letter and sounds (phonics) activities help pupils make good progress in their speaking and writing. Where

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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teaching is less effective, learning and progress are held back because some teachers do not plan adequately enough for the range of abilities in the class, with the result that a minority of pupils are either not challenged enough or they struggle to comprehend. In a minority of lessons teachers sometimes talk too much, which limits the time pupils are actively and independently learning. This results in slower progress and less time to articulate what they have learnt.

The school has set up very thorough systems to check on pupils' progress and these are generally well used to ensure that none is in danger of falling behind. There is, however, some variability between year groups and subjects in the way that teachers use assessment to consistently set next steps for each pupil's learning.

The curriculum is successful in assisting pupils to build basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Learning is meaningful because the school carefully plans themes with strong links between subjects. Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum that is enhanced well through local partnerships. For example, links with a local secondary school broaden pupils' experiences by extending their language skills. There is an excellent focus on using visits and the arts to widen pupils' life experiences. Curricular planning does not always make clear enough the activities that will give higher attainers the opportunities they need to challenge and extend their learning.

Care, guidance and support are strong features of the school's provision. The school has a caring ethos in which all pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, receive good support. Those who have statements of special educational needs receive carefully tailored support that allows them to benefit from lessons in mainstream classes. Links between support staff, the special needs coordinator and the teachers are particularly effective in ensuring that these pupils play a full part in all aspects of the life of the school.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since her appointment under a year ago, the headteacher has embarked on a mission to take the school on a journey to excellence. She works tenaciously to improve pupils' educational opportunities and communicates her high expectations persuasively. She engenders loyalty among staff who work with clarity and enthusiasm in their goal to meet the school's high expectations for pupils' success. In this way, the school

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effectively promotes equality for all pupils.

Middle leaders are eager to take real accountability for their respective areas. They are increasingly taking responsibility for monitoring progress and the quality of teaching, which is contributing to improvements. The governing body is extremely supportive of all the school's work and is growing into its role as a critical friend by asking the searching questions that hold the school to account for its performance. However, it is at an early stage of evaluating how well a number of its policies are being implemented. The limited extent to which pupils are encouraged to become involved in the wider community and with others from different ethnic groups and cultures, means that community cohesion is not well developed and is no more than satisfactory. Some important issues regarding site security were identified by inspectors. The headteacher and governing body had recognised these risks and by the time inspectors had left the school, work was in hand to rectify them.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision for the Reception class enables children to achieve well and develop good independence. Teaching is good. Children make good progress because a team of well-qualified adults supports the children skilfully by asking focused questions to develop their understanding. There is a good balance of activities led by adults and those from which children can choose. Children are developing excellent social skills because they are making choices and fostering independence through working with others. All adults make observations of children and assess their learning so that next

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steps are sharply focused. By the end of the Reception Year, standards in most areas are securely above those expected for their age. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a very secure understanding of the early years curriculum and constantly reviews her practice to ensure that all children receive high quality care and support. Staff make very good use of the facilities that they have but are hampered from extending learning in the outside area. This is because there are insufficient high quality outdoor resources for the children to improve their climbing, clambering and physical skills.

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

The school and its headteacher clearly enjoy the confidence and support of those parents who returned the questionnaire. Almost all respondents felt that their child enjoys school and that it helps them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. A number of individuals commented on the high quality care, support and guidance given to pupils, particularly to those with special educational needs. The inspectors agree with these views. A very small minority of parents speak of concerns regarding the progress made by their children. Inspectors disagree with these views and found that pupils were learning well and making good and, in some classes, excellent progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hilmarton 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	67	11	26	2	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	23	53	18	42	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	49	14	33	8	19	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	60	9	21	8	19	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	58	15	35	3	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	56	10	23	8	19	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	56	19	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)	19	44	17	40	4	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	49	15	35	5	12	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	44	14	33	5	12	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	42	22	51	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	44	17	40	7	16	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	67	10	23	3	7	0	0

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.



13 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hilmarton Primary School, Calne SN11 8SG

Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. What a lovely two days we had. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. Hilmarton is a good school and you are right to be proud of it.

Here are some of the really good things we found out about it:

- You behave impeccably around the school and in your classes and you look after each other so well.
- You relish working in groups and helping each other to learn and you readily help your classmates when they find things difficult.
- You make good progress as you move through the school and your achievement is getting better all the time.
- By the time you leave at the end of Year 6, you reach standards in all your subjects that are higher than those in most other schools because your teachers teach you well and you also work very hard.
- Your headteacher and all your other teachers know exactly how to make your school even better.

We have asked your school to do the following:

- It must make sure that far more of you make the same very fast progress in mathematics as you do in English.
- Teachers must ensure that the work they plan for you is neither too easy nor too hard, and gives you opportunities to find things out for yourselves.
- It must give you more chances to learn more about the beliefs and ways of life of people who come from different backgrounds from yourselves.

I am sure that you will help them by always working hard and aiming really high.

Yours faithfully

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector

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