

Harpole Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121976
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314174
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Tim Bristow HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Number on roll	207

Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Doughty
Headteacher	Mr Terry Mortimer
Date of previous school inspection	31 March–3 April 2003
School address	Larkhall Lane Harpole Northamptonshire NN7 4DP
Telephone number	01604 830072
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Harpole Primary School is below average in size. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who are eligible for free school meals are below average. At the time of the inspection, no pupils spoke English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. Pupils' good personal development and well-being and their outstanding contribution to the community are nurtured by good care, guidance and support and an exciting curriculum.

By the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement and standards are satisfactory. A recent decline in standards has been halted this year because of improvements in teaching. An acceleration in the progress made by pupils this year, particularly in English, means that the school is now well placed for future improvements in achievement. Progress in mathematics is slower because the school has rightly prioritised the need to raise the standard of writing.

The school has a happy atmosphere in which pupils are kind and caring to each other. They are polite and friendly when talking to adults, demonstrating good levels of self-confidence and consideration for others. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins pupils' good behaviour. Pupils feel very safe in school and have a good understanding of how to obtain help when they need it. Healthy lifestyles are being adopted as pupils take regular exercise, and many who live in the village chose to cycle to school in the summer. Most pupils make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. The school council makes a very strong contribution by managing many projects to improve facilities. For example, they have persuaded the school to provide a clock outside so that pupils are aware when break time ends. Close links with a school in Sri Lanka have inspired pupils to organise charity events, for example the stalls they organise during the village Scarecrow Festival. Pupils have a strong relationship with the local community. The village depends on the participation of pupils for the success of their annual Rose Queen celebrations. Pupils have a satisfactory preparation for education in secondary school because of the satisfactory progress they make and their good social skills.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory because the progress made by pupils is satisfactory. However, there are a number of good features. Teaching assistants give good support, particularly to those who need extra help with English and mathematics, and lessons are well planned and structured. In some lessons, the work set does not provide sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. The curriculum offers many activities that make lessons exciting and enriching. The Activemark and Artsmark awards have recognised this in 2007. Most pupils take part in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities that they thoroughly enjoy. Pupils are well looked after. School has effective procedures to ensure pupils' safety and security. Recent improvements have strengthened teaching and academic care, guidance and support, for example, the targets pupils have to guide them in improving their work. However, these are not yet being consistently applied so that some pupils do not find them helpful.

The self-evaluation of the school is good. The headteacher has successfully created an enthusiastic and dedicated team of teachers who are improving the quality of teaching and learning and accelerating the rate of progress made by pupils. Consequently, the school's capacity for improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the Reception class. Strong home–school links and liaison with local pre-school providers ensure that children make a smooth transition to school. The weekly ‘drop in’ sessions are well attended by parents, who speak highly of the provision. The curriculum is innovative and well planned to ensure children have a good balance of activities to improve their academic skills and develop their independence. Adults work very well as a team to provide good care, support and guidance to ensure children’s safety and well-being. Consequently, children make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress made by pupils in mathematics.
- Challenge the more able in English and mathematics lessons to demonstrate more creativity and independence in their work.
- Consolidate the improvements in teaching and academic care, guidance and support by ensuring that they are applied consistently in all lessons.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In most years, children enter school with skills that are typical for their age. This year, however, children have entered school with skills that exceed those that are typical for their age. They make good progress and enter Year 1 having exceeded the expected goals for learning at the end of Reception. In most years, progress is maintained so that by the end of Year 2, pupils’ standards are above average. However, national test results for 2007 show that standards overall were average. School information and pupils’ work show that progress in Key Stage 1 this year has accelerated because of recent improvements in teaching.

The progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Standards have declined in recent years. Test results in 2007 show that by Year 6 standards attained by pupils were broadly average. Work carried out by the school to improve teaching has halted this decline and progress has accelerated so that pupils are well placed to achieve the challenging targets set. Progress is slower in mathematics because insufficient attention has been paid to it. The progress of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with other groups of pupils in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their attendance, which is above average. Pupils demonstrate good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are respectful and considerate, showing great compassion for disadvantaged children in other parts of the world. Behaviour is good and the pupils are enthusiastic

about the reward system. They demonstrate a good understanding of why they should eat healthy snacks at break and lunchtime and welcome the introduction of a hot school meal. They have a good awareness of safe practices. They feel bullying is rare, but are clear about what they would do if they felt unhappy or anxious about any aspects of school life. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community. They demonstrate an extremely responsible attitude when caring for other pupils at break and lunchtime. They are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. For example, they report that they appreciate the suggestion boxes they use in school and 'circle time' and that adults are interested in their opinions and ideas. The school council is involved in formulating the school development plan, making a major contribution to the work of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Many new initiatives to improve teaching have been introduced recently, for example improvements in the teaching of writing. Teachers are working hard to embed these changes into all lessons, but at the time of the inspection, the impact of some of them is not apparent. In most lessons, classroom management is good, relationships are strong and pupils generally enjoy their learning and respond well to teachers. Teachers make effective use of resources, including interactive whiteboards and laptops to stimulate and maintain pupils' interest. Work is not always pitched at the correct level for some groups of pupils, particularly the more able, which slows the progress they could make. The introduction of mid-year assessments means that teachers now have a much better understanding of the progress that pupils are making. Teachers are accurately identifying those pupils who are not making the progress they should and providing extra activities to help them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers many enriching and stimulating activities, adding excitement to lessons. The introduction of the International Primary Curriculum has had a considerable impact on pupils' attitudes, creativity and independence. At the time of the inspection, the impact of the changes in the curriculum on standards and achievement is not clear. Many pupils report how much they enjoy the activities in which they take part. There are effective links between subjects so that pupils can apply their literacy skills in other lessons. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in this way. The curriculum has been successful in encouraging pupils to take greater responsibility for the community. For example, some pupils decided to raise money for 'Water Aid' in response to a science lesson where pupils were discovering methods to clean drinking water for people in Tanzania.

The school has an impressive range of school clubs in which the majority of pupils take part. Many pupils take advantage of the opportunity to play a musical instrument. The school provides a good range of activities to support pupils who need extra help with English and mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are good, secure systems to ensure pupils are well cared for and safe. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous. Staff are committed to pupils' well-being and provide good support for all and particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, where successful partnerships have been established with outside agencies. The school has very good procedures that enable pupils to discuss things that may be concerning them, for example the 'listening ear' in which pupils' worries are dealt with sensitively. Year 6 pupils are well prepared to ensure a smooth transition to secondary education. Academic care, guidance and support are strengthening. The school now has an accurate measure for tracking the progress of pupils. Marking is carried out conscientiously and is particularly good in English lessons. Pupils get useful advice on the next steps they need to take to improve their work. In some other lessons, it is not as helpful and pupils report that they would welcome more advice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher demonstrates a clear vision for school improvement. He has had to lead the school in recent years through a period of turbulence caused by many staff changes, particularly amongst school leaders. This has been a cause of concern for a small minority of parents. However, he is now well supported by subject leaders who regularly check the work of the school and have made many recommendations for improvements that are strengthening the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders have not yet ensured that some of these improvements are being applied consistently in all lessons. Useful measures have been introduced so that leaders have a good understanding of the progress pupils make. Governance is good. Governors are very knowledgeable and supportive. They have taken full advantage of training so that they are well prepared to hold the school to account for its work. The majority of parents support the work of the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harpole Primary School, Harpole, NN7 4DP

Thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. You made us feel very welcome. If you remember, we came to look at the work that you were doing and to talk to you and your teachers. You behave very well and are kind and considerate to each other. The work you do to raise money for charities demonstrates that you show great concern for those that are less fortunate than you are. We think that you take your responsibilities to the school and to the wider community extremely seriously and your contribution is valued. You take part in many exciting activities, which you told us that you thoroughly enjoy. You work hard in lessons and are eager to learn.

You get a good start to school when you are in the Reception class. Your headteacher and all of the staff are successfully working hard to look after you and improve your education.

Considering everything, we decided that yours is a satisfactory school.

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

- help you to do even better in your mathematics lessons
- give more challenging and interesting activities to those of you who generally find the work easy
- make sure that the changes teachers are making to improve your lessons happen all the time.

You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and acting on the advice they give you to improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector