

Harlestone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121826
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359091
Inspection dates	17–18 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Clifton

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	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Ashton Davies
Headteacher	Jan Abrams
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited six lessons and observed three teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. The inspector talked to pupils in lessons and at break times. He observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including development planning, monitoring information and evidence of safeguarding procedures, and pupils' books. He analysed 33 responses to the parental questionnaire and took account of the views expressed by parents and carers during informal meetings and conversations.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The school's information about the progress and learning of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and most-able pupils.
- How well work challenges different groups of pupils' in the mixed-age classes and the use of targets by pupils.
- How effectively leaders work to strengthen the quality of teaching and eradicate underachievement, including the impact of the federation partnership.
- The extent to which evidence supports the school's work in being healthy and feeling safe, which leaders grade as outstanding.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller-than-average size school serving the local village and rural community. There are two classes, one with pupils from Reception to Year 2 and the second from Years 3 to 6. Most pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. New staff have joined the school since September 2010 including an executive headteacher, who works across two schools in a federation arrangement. The schools have separate governing bodies. Children in the Early Years Foundation stage have their own separate covered and enclosed outdoor learning area, which is adjacent to the playground.

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

2

Main findings

Harlestone is a satisfactory school. It is improving rapidly and has the strong support of parents. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and their attainment is broadly average. Last year, pupils in Years 3 to 6 did not make enough progress and several of them underachieved. However, the headteacher and teachers are sharply focused on accelerating progress. As a result of the good teaching in lessons pupils are now making faster progress but this has yet to overcome fully the pupils' earlier underachievement. This means their achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the highly targeted interventions and additional support that is provided. Children in Reception get off to a good start and they work happily alongside pupils in Year 1 and 2. Planning to meet their needs across the areas of learning is better in the shared classroom than the outdoor area.

Pupils are very proud of their school and express their views with a great deal of assurance. The many pupils spoken to during the inspection indicated that they feel safe at all times and that they have great confidence in the adults who look after them. They have an acute awareness of the possible dangers of using the internet and take a lead role in promoting road safety. Pupils have an exceptional understanding about the factors that can have an impact on their health and well being, including the dangers of smoking and risk of heart disease arising from an unhealthy diet. Many eat healthy packed lunches and enthusiastically join in with daily exercise and after-school sporting activities. Pupils have a strong sense of being treated fairly and they get on noticeably well together. However, their understanding of people from different cultures and backgrounds within the United Kingdom is limited. Pupils say they really enjoy the choir, which is established across the two schools.

Relationships in lessons are strong and pupils willingly help each other with learning. Planning for different groups of pupils in the mixed-age classes is based on a good understanding of their different needs. However, the most-able pupils do not always reach the higher levels of attainment because provision is not sufficiently fine-tuned. Pupils have individual targets based on their current work to help them to understand what they need to do to improve. There are opportunities for the pupils to consider for themselves what they need to do to improve but these are not yet sufficiently embedded across the school. The curriculum meets requirements but links between different subjects are at an early stage of development.

The executive headteacher of the federation, with strong support from the governing body, has taken positive steps to accelerate pupils' progress through better teaching. This is supported well through links with the partner school that have enabled expertise to be shared. Since the previous inspection, a number of key areas have been improved, including the provision in the Reception year and the tracking of pupils' progress.

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Governors have been influential in promoting better attendance and this has shown rapid improvement and is now above average. Given these improvements, the school demonstrates a good capacity for sustained development.

Up to 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly to increase the numbers of pupils working at the higher levels of attainment by:
 - ensuring planning consistently meets the needs of the most-able pupils
 - developing the use of targets in lessons and giving pupils more opportunities to assess their own work and set themselves goals
 - developing the use of the outside area in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve links between different subjects in order to make learning more relevant and to promote better use of basic skills across the curriculum.
 - Develop pupils' understanding of others from different cultures and backgrounds within the United Kingdom.

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

The children's skills, knowledge and understanding when they start school fluctuate from year to year. Significant improvements to teaching and learning have accelerated pupils' progress and enabled them to make up for lost ground, so that they are now back on track to achieve the levels expected given their starting points. Although their current progress is good, the gains that they have made over time are no better than satisfactory. Attainment at Year 2 and 6 over the past three years has been broadly average. The current Year 6 pupils are working consistently at or above age related expectations. The most-able pupils in Year 2 are writing at the upper end of the expected level 2. Pupils with special educational needs are on track to reach challenging targets.

Pupils in Years 5 and 6 use information and communication technology confidently (ICT) to find out about the function of the heart. They explore different two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes to work out symmetry and reflection. Younger pupils make good progress in their understanding of fractions and in using adventurous vocabulary to describe a character in a story.

Pupils' positive behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning. Their work as junior road-safety officers has given them an acute awareness of keeping safe on roads. They have supported adults in a campaign to encourage safer parking through the use of 'parking' tickets. Older pupils speak knowledgeably about the possible dangers of alcohol and drugs and the effects of smoking on the lungs. Pupils actively take on additional duties to help out around the school. They help to compost waste and recycle materials. They say, for example, that recycling is important in order to reduce the amount of rubbish sent to landfill sites. In assembly, the pupils reflect carefully about personal goals. Their personal development and acquisition of core skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

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 pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

There is a purposeful learning atmosphere in lessons and teachers manage the pupils well. Planning is distinctive for different levels of ability although the most-able pupils are not always moved onto tasks that are more complex quickly enough. Teachers frequently use questioning well to promote thinking and this is supported through paired talk and discussions. Time is used effectively because pupils respond quickly to requests and take on responsibility, for example, to help organise the tables and chairs after assembly. Teaching assistants work effectively with individual groups to extend or review previous learning. Good use of 'stickers' is encouraging the pupils to be more aware of individual targets, for example in numeracy and writing. Strategies to help them to decide for themselves what they have achieved in their work and to identify personal goals are not as well developed. Curriculum planning is largely subject-based and, while links between subjects are being developed appropriately, these are recent improvements. As a result, opportunities to apply numeracy and literacy skills in different contexts are missed. The curriculum has strengths in the promotion of aspects of pupils' personal development, including being safe and keeping healthy. Key skills, for example, investigation and problem solving in science and mathematics are planned for securely and the use of talk for writing is well established.

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Pupils and their parents and carers are known individually. They are given a warm and friendly welcome on arrival at the start of the day. Parents and carers of many pupils have chosen the school because of the family ethos. Any issue or concern is dealt with swiftly. The recent campaign to promote better attendance through regular newsletters and certificates has been particularly successful, although older pupils do not attend as regularly as younger ones. Induction arrangements to help children settle in the Early Years Foundation stage are good.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has the strong support of staff and is successfully strengthening teamwork through links with the partner school. This has enabled expertise to be shared across the two schools for example through joint training. Accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses is exemplified in a well-written development plan. Staff have embraced new ideas, and sharing expertise is welcomed and seen as beneficial. The headteacher has been highly focused on improving the quality of teaching through monitoring and support. While this has been successful, she recognises that the learning of the most-able pupils is not sufficiently promoted. Therefore, provision to secure equal opportunities and tackle discrimination for all pupils is satisfactory.

Members of the governing body have played their full part in determining the strategic direction of the school through the development of the federation. They recognise that planning to promote wider national and international links to deepen pupils' understanding of those from different cultures and backgrounds is at an early stage of development. Governors ensure that safeguarding has a high priority in the school. Staff have been well-trained in child protection and the school follows good practice in the recruitment of staff. Regular checks are made to ensure that the premises and equipment are safe. The school's drive to improve attendance through newsletters and regular personal contact with parents has been particularly successful.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress, particularly with language, literacy and communication and are currently working in line with age-related expectations. They play with each other confidently and are learning to take turns. Reception children happily join pupils in Years 1 and 2 to listen and talk about a story, although a few lose concentration because it goes on for too long. Writing opportunities are woven well through play activities. For example, children write shopping lists, invitations to a birthday party and on envelopes. Letters and their sounds are taught well and used to help the children read simple words. Adults promote good use of language by joining in with role play and engaging the children in conversation. Particular attention is given to helping the boys to concentrate. The children made 'pizzas' out of dough, counted the pieces and discussed what would be good for the topping. Several ideas were suggested including tomatoes and worms.

The outdoor learning area and the playground are used suitably promote all areas of learning; for example, the children much enjoy playing in tents. However, the learning environment is not as rich as that provided in the main classroom areas. For example, writing is not as strongly promoted. The children's development is carefully tracked through records and in profile books. Comments record special moments and events.

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

The responses to the questionnaire reflect a very positive relationship with most groups of parents and carers. A good number of questionnaires were received for the size of the school and about a quarter included comments. These nearly all indicate a high level of satisfaction with the school. Parents and carers value the family nature of the school and several commented that their children are flourishing. A particular mention is made of the good support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. One parent commented that the school invited them in to help devise an individual learning plan. The one-to-one tuition is also highly valued. The inspector judged these strategies to be very effective in helping the pupils to improve their basic skills.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harlestone 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 inspector received 33 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 42 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	73	9	27	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	61	12	36	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	61	11	33	0	0	2	6
The teaching is good at this school	23	70	8	24	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	61	10	30	3	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	73	9	27	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)	21	64	11	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	61	11	33	2	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	64	11	33	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	67	9	27	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	70	10	30	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	70	10	30	0	0	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



21 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harlestone Primary School, Northampton, NN7 4EN

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and for talking to me so confidently about your work. You were very polite and friendly. You go to a satisfactory school, but it is improving and the teaching is good. Here are some of the things I particularly liked about your school.

Your progress is improving because teachers give you activities which help you to learn well.

Those of you with special education needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the extra help that you get.

Children in Reception get off to a good start.

You are cared for well in school and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and keep active and healthy.

You behave well and concentrate well in lessons.

Your headteacher has worked hard to improve teaching and this is helping you to learn better.

You get on well together and there is a distinctive family atmosphere.

To help you make even faster progress, I have asked your headteacher to help you to use targets more often to assess your own work and to have work that is always challenging. I have also asked the school to improve the outdoor learning area in Reception. Your headteacher rightly wants to improve the curriculum by making better links between different subjects. Finally, I have asked the staff to give you more opportunities to work with others from different backgrounds and cultures, for example, in different schools.

You can help your teachers by always coming to school unless you are unwell.

Yours sincerely

Peter Clifton

Lead inspector

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