

INSPECTION REPORT

HARLESTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lower Harlestone, Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 121826

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Linda Wood

Lead inspector: Mrs Julie Moore

Dates of inspection: 15th – 16th March 2004

Inspection number: 256340

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	45
School address:	Church Lane Lower Harlestone Northampton Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN7 4EN
Telephone number:	01604 842391
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Drysdale
Date of previous inspection:	8 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Harlestone is a small school with 45 pupils on roll. It is situated in the village of Harlestone, near Northampton. Most pupils have to be brought by car or taxi. Most pupils are white and there are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, all of whom speak English fluently. Children joining the reception group are from a range of backgrounds and their skills and understanding are broadly average for their age. About one third of all the pupils on roll have special educational needs. These are mostly for moderate learning difficulties or speech and language difficulties. The school was granted an Investor in People award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8710	Julie Moore	Lead inspector	Foundation stage English Art and design Design and technology Music Religious education
10965	Pat Edwards	Lay inspector	
18346	Rod Bristow	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Geography History Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Harlestone Primary School provides an **effective** education for its pupils. The school is well led by the acting headteacher who is fully supported by staff, governors, pupils and parents. Teamwork is good and the school is managed soundly. Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Teaching is good and the school provides a good quality education for its pupils. There is a strong caring and family ethos, which is the main reason that parents have chosen Harlestone for their children's education. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science and pupils' achievement is good.
- Learning is effective because the pupils are well taught. Their knowledge and understanding are developed well.
- Teachers are strongly supported by their teaching assistants, who make sure that pupils of all capabilities extend their learning successfully.
- Pupils' targets are not driving up standards consistently and teachers' marking does not identify how well pupils are doing or what needs to be done to reach their targets.
- Pupils' skills are not identified specifically enough in information and communication technology and other subjects, the exceptions being English, mathematics and science.
- Systems for checking how well the pupils are doing are not fully in place in every subject.
- Pupils are interested in everything that happens at school, they are keen to attend, and they try hard to do their best.
- The very good links with parents mean that they are well briefed in how to support their children effectively. This has a positive impact on standards and achievement across the board.

There has been a good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. Standards, teaching and learning are all much better than they were, especially in the junior¹ class. The school has a long term plan which guides its future development effectively, and the curriculum is broad and balanced. All statutory requirements are met in religious education and the school has a good range of resources that successfully supports pupils' learning.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Care needs to be taken when interpreting these results because of the very small numbers of pupils in the year group. One pupil more or less can make a significant difference to overall results.

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A*	A	A	C
Mathematics	A	A*	A	B
Science	A	C	A	C

Key: A - high standards; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E* low standards. Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 6*

In 2003, pupils in Year 6 attained well above average standards in English, mathematics and science in their national tests. Pupils in Year 2 did equally well in reading, writing and science, and results were in the highest five per cent in the country. They achieved less well in mathematics where they reached below average standards. Girls do slightly better than boys in the tests as they do nationally.

¹ Juniors are Years 3 to 6. Infants are the Reception Year and Years 1 and 2.

The very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds attain similar standards to their classmates and they achieve equally well. When pupils start in the reception class at Harlestone their skills and understanding are broadly average. Their achievement is good and they are on course to exceed their targets² by the end of the reception year. In the infants and juniors, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. They are above average in information and communication technology and in religious education in the juniors and average in the infants. Overall achievement is **good**. Boys and girls have very positive attitudes towards school. Their behaviour is very good and they constantly strive to do their best. Pupils enjoy having the responsibility for organising some of their work, which they do well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Pupils' attendance is only satisfactory because too many parents choose to take their children on holiday during term time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**, as are teaching and learning. The strong focus on literacy and numeracy has successfully boosted standards in these curriculum areas. Teachers give good levels of support to all their pupils and this moves their learning forward successfully. However, marking does not always indicate clearly enough what needs to be done to improve. Pupils are well-motivated and they work productively because they are well taught. There are sound systems for assessing pupils' progress and achievement in English, mathematics and science but the systems are less secure in the other subjects. Pupils' skills are not developed consistently in each class. The teaching assistants make an effective contribution towards enhancing pupils' achievement in every subject. The curriculum is good with a wide range of activities that enhance the basic curriculum successfully for all pupils. No-one is left out. All pupils are cared for well. The very good links with parents benefit the pupils well, as do the links with other schools and the local community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership is **good**, as is the governance of the school. Management is **satisfactory**. The acting headteacher gives a very clear steer to the school and she is moving it forward at a good pace. Governors are very supportive, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they always apply the principles of best value well. They are effective critical friends. Target setting and tracking are at an early stage of development and require a sharper focus if they are to guide improvement in standards and achievement across the board.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views of the school and its staff, as do the pupils. Parents are well pleased with the education that the school provides for their children. They feel their opinions are listened to and valued. Pupils enjoy school and they are happy there.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Make better use of the information about pupils' gains in learning to set specific targets.
- Extend the systems for assessing how well pupils are doing so that all subjects are covered.
- Improve marking so that pupils' progress towards their targets is clearly identified and pupils know what they have to do in order to improve.
- Strengthen the ways in which the school identifies and develops pupils' skills across the wider curriculum.

² These are called the early learning goals.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

General point. This is a small school with just two classes and very small numbers in every year group, ranging from four pupils to nine pupils. The infant class has reception, Year 1 and 2 pupils, and the junior class has pupils in Years 3 to 6. Because of these small numbers one pupil more or less can make a very significant difference to overall standards. Results must be treated with caution.

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good** for boys and girls across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science for both the infants and the juniors.
- Standards in religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT) are above average in the juniors.
- Children in the reception class achieve well.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for. Their achievement is good.
- The very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as well as their classmates.
- Pupils' competence in ICT is curtailed because their skills are not firmly in place.

Commentary

1. Standards have improved since the last inspection, especially for pupils in Years 3 to 6. In the most recent national tests, in the Summer of 2003, standards for the seven-year-olds were in the highest five per cent in the country in reading and writing. They were below average in mathematics. Standards were well above average in English, mathematics and science for the eleven-year-olds. When compared to similar schools nationally, eleven-year-olds attained average standards in English and science and above average in mathematics.
2. The current Year 2 group speak confidently and clearly, and they enjoy participating in drama sessions where they use their voices to good effect. Reading and writing skills are firmly in place and pupils use these skills well to enhance their achievement in other subjects. This holds good for the Year 6 pupils too. They speak confidently in a range of contexts, engaging the listener well. Higher, average and lower attaining pupils from different ethnic backgrounds use a range of effective strategies to identify unknown words in the text. They write successfully in different genres, using ICT successfully as part of their day-to-day work in English.
3. There is an upward trend to the school's results and this stems from good teaching and effective learning right from the start of the reception year. The acting headteacher and her team have a positive impact on driving up standards. Strengths and weaknesses are speedily identified so that the momentum for learning is not lost.
4. The school's targets were met last year, and the current Year 6 group are on course to achieve their targets, which are challenging. One of the strengths in this small school is the staff's knowledge of their pupils. This means that any gaps in learning are picked up straight away and no time is wasted in preparing suitable tasks so that pupils' learning does not slow down. The next stage is to have a sharper focus on pupils' individual targets and to make sure that progress towards their targets is clearly identified when work is marked.
5. Children join the reception class (known as the foundation stage) with a wide range of pre-school experiences. Their skills and understanding are broadly average for their age in all areas of

learning.³ Achievement is good and the children make good progress because they are well taught. Most children are on course to exceed their targets by the end of the reception year.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and they achieve well, like their classmates. There are no barriers to learning and the school ensures that they have full access to the whole curriculum. Pupils benefit from the expertise of teachers and teaching assistants, and they make good progress towards their targets. Teachers plan work at different levels in literacy and numeracy lessons, and they use the guidance from specialists outside school to support pupils with difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics. This enables pupils on all levels of support to achieve well.
7. The very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are all fluent English speakers. They are fully included in every aspect of school life and their achievement is good, like their classmates.

Pupils’ attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils’ personal qualities, their attitudes and behaviour are **very good** and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy taking part in the activities provided.
- The behaviour of pupils is very good in lessons and at break times.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are very good.
- Pupils’ moral and social development are very good, pupils know right from wrong and respect each other.

Commentary

8. Pupils like being part of the school community. They enjoy the activities provided and concentrate very well in lessons. They know they have to work hard and try to do their best. Staff have high expectations for behaviour and pupils’ behaviour is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Relationships between adults and pupils in the school are very good. Pupils enjoy acting as helpers and playground friends which encourages their independence. Older pupils are able to carry out independent research using the library.
9. The pupils feel safe and secure and are positive about themselves and their learning. Teachers value pupils’ contributions and collective worship encourages pupils to reflect and develop self awareness. Staff provide very good role models in their dealings with pupils and each other. Pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. They know the golden rules and respond very well to bonus points given for good work and behaviour. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of different cultures because the school values and celebrates diversity.
10. Attendance for the last reporting year was above the national average at 95.4 per cent but has fallen slightly this year because of holidays taken in term time. Staff monitor attendance very carefully and absence is followed up on the first day. No pupils have been excluded from school.

Authorised absence	
School data	4.8
National data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.4

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

³ This is the name given to the curriculum areas followed by children in nursery and reception classes.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good**. The curriculum is good, with a wide range of extra activities that enhance the basic curriculum successfully. The very good links with parents benefit the pupils well, as do the links with other schools and the local community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **good** and learning moves forward at a good pace throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strong focus on literacy and numeracy has boosted standards successfully.
- Teaching assistants make a very effective contribution towards enhancing pupils' achievement in every class.
- Children get a good start in the reception class. Teaching is good and the children make good gains in their learning.
- Pupils' targets are not based firmly enough on how well pupils are doing.
- Teachers' marking does not always identify what pupils need to do to improve their work in order to achieve their individual targets.
- Procedures for assessment are not rigorous enough except in the main subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs are given good support that enables them to achieve well, like their classmates.

Commentary

11. There have been good improvements since the last inspection when teaching in Years 3 to 6 was a significant weakness. This is no longer the case, and teaching is good in these year groups, as it is in all the other year groups. Lessons are well planned throughout the school and regular assessments enable staff to chart pupils' progress and achievement in the main subjects. Assessment systems are less effective in the other subjects and this is an area for development.
12. Children get a good start to their education when they join the reception class. Tasks are interesting and exciting. They are well planned and are pitched at the right level because children's progress and achievement is well tracked, and staff use this information to plan the next stages in learning. There is a good balance between those activities directed by the teacher and those initiated by the children themselves. This gives the children ample opportunity to learn effectively through a range of suitable activities. Children of all capabilities and backgrounds make good gains in their learning, achieving well. Children with special educational needs are identified early on, which enables them to have the right kind of support that helps them to succeed as well as their classmates.
13. Teaching is good overall in Years 1 and 2 but there are variations. In the stronger lessons, where learning is effective, teachers' planning is good and work is pitched at the right levels. Learning moves forward at a good pace and no time is wasted, pupils are fully engaged throughout the lessons and there are good gains in learning for pupils of all capabilities and backgrounds. This results in good achievement and above average standards. Where learning falls short of expectations, in a very small minority of lessons, the pupils are not challenged. When this happens they lose interest and their concentration flags. Standards and achievement are diminished.
14. In Years 3 to 6 the teaching is lively, brisk and challenging. There is some very good teaching and this is the main reason that standards are as high as they are in English, mathematics and science. Activities are planned at different levels for pupils of different capabilities, and effective

assessment means that teachers know when learning slows. This enables them to plan and provide good support, so that pupils' learning starts to accelerate again.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection In 20 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5	10	4	1	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

15. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. Teaching assistants provide high quality support, which helps pupils to achieve their targets. Planning is detailed and thorough, and is firmly based on pupils' individual plans. Effective assessment tracks pupils' progress and achievement well, enabling staff to make sure that pupils' good progress does not falter.
16. The acting headteacher and her team have worked very hard and successfully to overcome the weaknesses identified during the last inspection. Much of the teaching is good or better, but there is still work to do if all teaching is to reach the same high standard as the best. There are three main points to be tackled:-
 - Not enough use is made of the information about pupils' gains in learning to set specific targets for individuals.
 - There are sound systems for assessing pupils' progress and achievement in the core subjects but the systems are less secure in the other subjects.
 - Teachers' marking does not identify clearly enough what has to be done in order to improve standards and achieve targets.
17. Homework supports pupils' learning successfully and parents are happy to help. This boosts pupils' achievement all round, as well as giving parents an insight into how well their child is doing. Staff are well motivated to improve, and there is the willingness and the capability to progress.

The curriculum

There is a **good** broad and balanced curriculum in the school. With the exception of physical education, the indoor accommodation is suitable for the number of pupils on roll to experience the requirements of the national curriculum. Teaching and support staff is matched to the needs of pupils. The quality of resources is good for a school of this size.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for junior children is good, a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- There are many good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum outside the normal school day.
- Reception children are well prepared for the next stage of learning.
- Teaching assistants are used well to support learning and to ensure that all receive the equal curricular experiences.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is consistently good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and leads to good progress being made by these pupils where support is available.

Commentary

18. Throughout, learning is planned in order to avoid the unnecessary repetition of experiences in mixed age classes. The quality of the curriculum in the junior class has been improved appreciably and is now good. Statutory requirements are met fully and national guidelines have

been introduced to plan for progress in all subjects. Religious education now follows the recommendations of the locally agreed syllabus.

19. The talents of teaching assistants and voluntary helpers are used effectively to ensure that all pupils regardless of gender, age or ethnicity achieve equally well. Evidence indicates that higher attaining pupils reach levels appropriate to their needs. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well from their starting points. Their individual education plans have measurable targets. They receive effective support and are fully included in all planned activities. This promotes good achievement.
20. The national strategies for numeracy and literacy have added consistency to the teaching of relevant skills. Daily literacy and numeracy sessions are taught soundly in each class and this has had a positive effect on the quality of provision particularly in the junior class where standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. Although other subjects follow national guidelines, skills have not always been experienced with the order and frequency required. Innovative planning with a neighbouring school has provided for gains in history and physical development for pupils up to the age of seven. Only recently has an appropriate range of physical experiences, particularly in gymnastics, been possible for Years 3 to 6 by transporting pupils to use the excellent resources at a local secondary school. Governors have planned provision for sex and relationships education, which is delivered through topics in science and personal, social and health education. The 'Life Education Caravan' is used effectively to provide appropriate experiences, which consider the differences between medicines and harmful drugs.
21. The curriculum has been enriched considerably by extra activities, in addition to those experienced during the normal school day. These add much to the breadth and relevance of the curriculum. A well-planned residential experience provides invaluable opportunities for the development of personal and social skills in Years 5 and 6. A wide range of visits to theatre and museum, and the creative use of the timetable, support learning very well in the junior class. Visitors extend pupils' cultural development and have included a theatre group presenting Shakespeare; a parent sharing the food and customs of Islam; and another sharing personal experience of the Passover. There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop sporting skills. Pupils have experienced a lunchtime football club, and a cricket club is in the planning stage. Reception children are well prepared for the transfer to Year 1 and pupils in Year 6 experience an effective programme of personal and social development in order to prepare them for transferring to secondary education.
22. With the exception of indoor facilities for step-by-step physical development, the accommodation is satisfactory for the number of pupils on roll. The outdoor accommodation does not provide well for regular outdoor experiences for pupils in the foundation stage (Reception Class). Resources are good for a school of this size and have been augmented by the generosity and commitment of the Friends of the school. Computer technology has been extended by the purchase of laptops.
23. Teachers and teaching assistants are matched adequately to the needs of the curriculum and the smooth running of the school. Full time teaching assistants are desirable to respond to the rigours of the wide range of ability in each class.

Care, guidance and support

The quality of support, advice and guidance is **good** and the pupils are fully involved in all aspects of the school's day-to-day life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff know their pupils well and are supportive of them.
- Parents are happy with the school's induction programme.
- Child protection training is up to date and procedures are implemented well by all staff.

Commentary

24. The school provides a caring family environment where pupils are valued as individuals. The personal development of pupils is closely monitored through discussion, such as circle time and pupils are regularly consulted by questionnaire to obtain their views on a range of issues. Staff know their pupils well and discuss targets for development with them but pupils are not always clear on what they need to do to improve. Child protection procedures are well understood by staff and training on child protection issues is up to date. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
25. The school has an appropriate health and safety policy. Regular risk assessments are carried out and all necessary safety checks on equipment are up to date. First aid boxes are appropriately stocked and sited and the procedures for informing parents of any accidents and the treatment given are effective. In reply to the questionnaire most parents say they are happy with the school's induction programme. This allows children to settle quickly and feel secure in their new surroundings.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with parents. It works effectively with the local community and schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with regular useful information.
- The staff are willing to talk to parents at any reasonable time.
- Parents value the school.
- Pupils' annual progress reports contain little information on how pupils can improve.
- The school has good links with other local schools.

Commentary

26. Most parents think very well of the school and are proud of what it achieves. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Parents are comfortable about approaching staff with any questions or concerns. They feel their opinions are listened to and valued. They know they are welcome in school at any time.
27. The information provided for parents in monthly newsletters and at termly parent teacher consultation meetings is good. The school prospectus is detailed and provides useful information. Pupils' annual progress reports are clear about what pupils can do with some broad targets for improvement but little information on how pupils can improve and ways in which their parents might help them at home.
28. Parents assist in the school, for example with reading, in the library, with science, information and communication technology and mathematics. This help is much valued by staff. Parents and pupils are happy with the homework given by teachers, which builds on learning undertaken during lessons.
29. The school has appropriate links with the community and works well with the local church, which is visited for harvest, a carol service and the leavers' assembly. The school has developed good links with other nearby schools, which work together on various initiatives such as a shared residential visit and curriculum links for history and physical education. Placements are provided in the school for students on initial teacher training at the University College, Northampton.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and governance are **good** and management is **satisfactory**. The acting headteacher provides **good** leadership as do other key members of staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The acting headteacher’s good leadership has resulted in a strong team spirit.
- The role of subject leaders requires further development.
- Some systems including assessment need further development.
- Governors support the school effectively.
- The principles of best value are applied well and self evaluation is accurate.

Commentary

30. In the short, uncertain time since her appointment at the beginning of this school year, the acting headteacher has provided effective, principled leadership. She has a clear vision for the development of the school that has resulted in many improvements. The most important of these are the establishment of a positive environment for learning and the creation of a strong, shared commitment to raise standards and bring about continuous improvement.
31. Subject leaders who have contributed to the improvement in religious education and science support the acting headteacher ably. Importance has been given to empowering teaching and support staff and allowing new ideas to flourish. In a relatively short period she has inspired and motivated staff and planned a more innovative use of the curriculum. This has been brought about by working closely with other schools to extend their curricular provision.
32. Management is satisfactory. The performance of staff is managed effectively and subject leaders are aware of the need for them to become more involved in co-ordinating improvement. The talents of teaching staff and teaching assistants have been harnessed well, and professional development is given a high priority. Teaching and learning are monitored but this work is at an early stage of development. The school analyses how well it is doing but acknowledges the need to improve its analysis of how well the pupils are doing, especially in the non-core subjects⁴. Further work is needed on the best ways of making sure that pupils know what they have to do in order to improve. The school improvement plan contains the main elements of expenditure but the costs of achieving the school development plan targets are not identified clearly enough. The bursar works effectively and efficiently, ensuring the smooth running of the school and the recommendations of the most recent audit report have been addressed.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	173,689
Total expenditure	182,157
Expenditure per pupil	3,875

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	37,330
Balance carried forward to the next	44,130

33. The application of best value principles is becoming more integral to the management of the school as governance becomes more effective. Self evaluation has been accurate in identifying the priorities of ICT; the foundation stage and a review of the curriculum to improve the development of pupils’ skills. Pupils have been consulted and the need for them to be informed how to improve is highlighted. Parental opinion is to be sought when modifying the sex and relationships policy.

⁴ The core subjects are English, mathematics, science, ICT and RE. All the other subjects are the non-core subjects.

34. Governors support the school well and ensure that it fulfils its statutory duties effectively. Governance is good. The acting headteacher has built a strong relationship with the governing body that allows governors to hold the school to account and to question proposals constructively. Visits to the school help governors to develop a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Finances are carefully monitored to make sure that the spending plan is on course. Funds have been earmarked for a specific building project to improve the quality of the accommodation. This is an effective project that is greatly needed in this small school. The school gives good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision for children in the foundation stage is **good**, as it was at the last inspection. Reception children join the school at the beginning of the year they are five and they have broadly average skills and understanding for their age. Children are taught in the same class as pupils in Years 1 and 2 – this is the infant class. All the group are taught by a class teacher who is well supported by two teaching assistants. Teaching is good as is children’s achievement. Tasks are pitched at the right level because staff know their children well in this small school, and there are effective systems for identifying how well the children are doing. Accurate assessment enables children’s learning to speed up rapidly, and this holds good for children of all capabilities. The curriculum is carefully planned and is based on the early learning goals. Parents are fully involved in helping their children and they are pleased with the provision at Harlestone.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children are keen and they want to learn because they are well taught.
- Relationships are very good.
- Children’s confidence is boosted well because they are encouraged to be independent.

Commentary

35. Children are confident when they join the reception group because they have had many opportunities to visit the school, play with the toys and meet the other children. All of this ensures they are well prepared for school life. Routines are established straight away so that children feel safe and secure, and every opportunity is taken to praise children’s independence and to reward them. Adults are good role models, making sure that the children know what is expected of them in every aspect of school life. They are well used to taking turns with their equipment and toys, and they are well used to sharing. Teaching is good, and pupils with special educational needs have sensitive support from the teaching assistants that enables them to cope successfully with school life. Most children are on course to exceed their early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Books are enjoyed and children are making a good start with reading.
- The teaching assistant’s very good input enables children to make significant gains in developing their language skills.
- Very good systems for tracking children’s progress mean that children of all capabilities achieve well.

Commentary

36. Most children are on course to exceed their goals in this area of learning. Literacy skills have a high priority right from the start of children’s time in the reception group, teaching is good, and the children make good progress. Speaking and listening skills are developed well and the

children have many opportunities to ask and respond to questions, to share ideas and to enjoy songs, rhymes and singing games. All of which ensure that learning is fun as well as being productive. Children enjoy listening to stories. They respond well to their teacher's questions about letter sounds, demonstrating a secure understanding of letter sounds and blends. Writing skills are taught well, with many pupils writing simple sentences with very little support from their teaching assistant.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Tasks are well planned and organised, enabling children's learning to be productive.
- Effective teaching means that children are challenged by their activities and their achievement is good.

Commentary

37. Skilled teaching allows children to enjoy number and as a result they are on course to exceed their goals by the end of the reception year. No opportunities are missed to develop the children's mathematical skills. Songs and singing games, and counting and clapping activities, make sure that the children have a good introduction to mathematical language as well as creating opportunities for them to use mental mathematics. Teaching is good, and many children can name two-dimensional shapes, count accurately to a high number and record numbers correctly. The strong focus on practical activities means that children have a secure understanding of mathematical language, shape and number.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD, PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT, CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

38. It was not possible to make an overall judgement about the provision for knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development as no specific lessons were observed during the inspection. Planning for these areas is good and the curriculum is very well documented and organised. Children's progress and achievement is well tracked and recorded so that any gaps in learning are identified and tackled straight away. Plans are in hand to develop the outdoor area, which will further improve the provision.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening are above average in both the infant and junior classes.
- Pupils write clearly and effectively in a range of genres, they demonstrate good understanding of their reading materials and they express their ideas fluently and thoughtfully.
- Individual targets are not used enough to move learning on for higher, average and lower attaining pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for and this helps them to make good progress.
- Teachers' comments on pupils' written work do not give a clear indication of what has to be done if standards are to improve.

Commentary

39. Standards in English are above average in both the infant and junior classes, an improvement since the last inspection. The very small numbers in every year group mean that overall results must be treated with caution as one pupil more or less can make a significant difference to overall results.
40. Children join the reception group in the infant class with broadly average skills and understanding in literacy. They make good progress because they are well taught, as are all the pupils in both the infant and junior classes. This means that their achievement is good and their learning is successful. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they get effective support all the way through school.
41. Listening and speaking skills are good, and are better than expected at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils listen attentively to each other and they reflect on what they hear before responding. Staff have worked hard at this and listening skills are well developed. Infant pupils are confident when dramatising a story, such as the story of Palm Sunday and Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem in an RE lesson. Pupils are adept at putting a range of suitable expressions into their voices, which show how well they interpret feelings of happiness and joy. Year 6 pupils speak confidently in a range of contexts, engaging the listener well. The school has worked hard to make sure that all staff create many opportunities for the pupils to engage in discussions, use effective questions, and respond at length. They are successful.
42. Standards in reading are above average throughout the school. Reading is enjoyed, and many pupils really do take pleasure in their books and reading activities. This is the result of a focused approach to learning that gives pupils the skills they need to read a text fluently and accurately. Reading has a strong focus from the time the children join the reception class and pupils of all capabilities use effective strategies to identify unknown words. Older pupils talk enthusiastically and at length about why they enjoy a certain book or work by a particular author. Pupils read at home, and parents complete their child's reading diary regularly. This contributes to learning effectively. The new libraries encourage all pupils to want to read and to develop a love of books. Reading skills are enhanced.
43. Written work has a clear structure and punctuation, presentation and spelling are good. ICT is used effectively to support pupils' learning. As the year has progressed higher, average and lower attaining pupils use an increasingly wide range of vocabulary and their work is presented well. Infant pupils are encouraged to become independent and creative writers and this is extended very well in the junior class. Here, pupils successfully demonstrate a range of ideas in

their imaginative writing, especially when writing stories from different perspectives. Some average and lower attaining pupils are inclined to use the present tense when the past tense is required, but they are making good progress in overcoming this difficulty. Good teaching is paying dividends. Across the school, individual targets guide pupils forward so that they know what is expected of them, but teachers' marking does not guide pupils to speed up their progress towards achieving their targets.

44. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers work together as an effective team. They work closely with their teaching assistants so that pupils have the right kind of support that enables them to do well. Teachers' high expectations about what the pupils are capable of achieving mean that the pupils rise successfully to the challenges set for them. Work is pitched at the right levels because staff know their pupils very well in this small school. Good use is made of information about how well the pupils are doing, and this helps staff to plan the next lessons. Higher, average and lower attaining pupils are set challenging tasks that move learning on at a good pace. This is why achievement is good.
45. The subject leader has worked hard to improve English, she is successful. Standards, achievement, teaching and learning are all much improved. Systems for tracking how well pupils are doing are firmly in place, and this boosts standards all round.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. Language and literacy across the curriculum are good overall. Pupils speak clearly and articulately, both to each other and in larger groups. Reading skills are used well, and good standards enable pupils to undertake their research effectively. This helps their learning in other subjects. Writing skills are good. Pupils work independently at a good pace so they cover a lot of ground, working speedily to complete their tasks.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average for pupils at the ages of seven and eleven and they achieve well.
- Teaching is of good quality and has improved greatly for pupils in Years 3 to 6 since the previous inspection.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well as usually do pupils of all capabilities.
- Teaching assistants and voluntary help are used effectively.
- Pupils are less motivated during whole class mental activities and their learning slows.

Commentary

47. Standards in mathematics by the age of seven have been maintained since the last inspection and remain above average. Standards have improved for the eleven-year-olds. The most recent test results for the seven-year-olds were below average but there were a *very* small number of pupils in the group. Standards for the eleven-year-olds were well above average.
48. The analysis of pupils' previous work in mathematics and the observation of lessons show that teaching is good overall, but there are variations. Where the teaching fell short of expectations the younger pupils in the class had challenging activities but the activities for older pupils were not suitably matched to their needs. In the junior class, pupils were grouped according to their capabilities and this worked well. The very good use of the teaching assistant, and the increased benefit of well qualified voluntary assistance, enabled the teacher to match both teaching and learning to the pupils' needs. Effective management enabled her to support each group well with pupils constantly challenged to improve. Pupils with programmes of special educational need

achieve well. In both classes strategies are required to ensure that motivation is maintained for all pupils during the mental introductions to lessons.

49. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 know how to count on and have sound understanding of number patterns to 20. Lower attaining pupils and those in the reception group understand number to 10 and calculate 'one more' and 'one less'. The teaching assistants contribute significantly to the learning of lower achieving pupils enabling them to become fully involved in the planned investigations. Consequently pupils with special educational needs in Years 3 to 6 are supported well when investigating fractions.
50. In discussion, older pupils enjoy mathematics, have good mental skills and choose from a growing range of strategies to arrive at solutions. There is evidence that boys and girls achieve equally well and that higher attaining pupils are usually challenged in Years 2 and 6. The introduction of the national numeracy strategy has transformed teachers' planning, enabling pupils to move forward in measured steps. Homework is used well to reinforce or introduce class activities. There are satisfactory assessment procedures which track progress as pupils progress through the school in measured steps. Individual targets have been introduced to sharpen progress and add greater challenge to the quality of teaching and learning. However, marking rarely refers to acquired skills nor are pupils informed how to improve. Pupils' ICT skills are used satisfactorily to support learning although there was little evidence of the gathering and interpretation of data.

Mathematics across the curriculum

51. Mathematical skills are used satisfactorily to support learning in other areas of the curriculum. Charts and tables are used well to record investigations in science; co-ordinates, scales and graphs in geography and timelines in history.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Years 2 and 6, most pupils attain the knowledge, skills and understanding in excess of what is expected nationally.
- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- Investigation skills are very good.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

52. In the lessons observed in each class, and in evidence of work in pupils' books, standards have improved significantly for pupils by the age of seven and eleven. In national testing in 2003, standards throughout were well above what was expected nationally when compared with all schools although only satisfactory when compared with similar schools by the age of eleven. The relatively small number of pupils in the age group makes these comparisons less reliable.
53. The teaching of science overall is good. In one lesson for pupils aged four to seven, activities were introduced briefly to each age with the maximum time given for exploring the suitability of a range of well chosen materials as being 'magnetic' or 'non-magnetic'. The use of constructive play enabled reception children to 'catch fish' and test whether materials were 'magnetic'. Pupils in Year 2 became very excited when investigating a range of magnets. They recorded skilfully, and many made accurate predictions. The teacher had very high expectations and her very good teaching contributed effectively to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Searching questions resulted in pupils sharing, 'there seems to be a wind between them' and 'it's forcing me to do it'.

54. Pupils achieved well when exploring solutions and mixtures in the junior class activity. Time was used effectively and pupils planned their investigations collaboratively. Pupils of all capabilities achieved well with very good support given to ensure that pupils with special educational needs were fully involved. Boys and girls achieved equally well and challenging questions ensured that high attaining pupils were stretched.
55. Achievement is good by the age of eleven because teaching is good. Pupils were eager to contribute, and offered sensible suggestions and asked questions as they discussed their experiences. Pupils are encouraged to adapt recording strategies to suit their needs.
56. There is now a subject leader for science and the subject is led well. Teaching follows national guidelines that cover all elements of the science curriculum in a balanced way. Assessment strategies are at an early stage of development resulting in few challenging targets for improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Computers are used effectively to support learning on a day-to-day basis.
- Voluntary help is used well to support teachers in introducing skills for junior pupils.
- The acquisition of skills is uneven due to assessment strategies being at an early stage of development.

Commentary

57. Pupils bring a good range of skills from home and share them in the classroom. These skills have been harnessed to support learning in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' ICT skills are developed in the classroom in an ad-hoc way, and there needs to be a clearer structure in place that enables all pupils' learning to move forward at an appropriate pace. Progress is sound in Years 1 and 2, and it improves in Years 3 to 6. However, some older pupils have gaps in their experiences of monitoring and data handling. This issue has been identified by the school and is being tackled.
58. The use of parental support on a weekly basis introduces groups of pupils in Years 3 to 6 to appropriate skills on a rotational basis. During the inspection Year 5 used laptops confidently to design 'wallpaper'. All pupils have experienced control technology by giving instructions to programmable toys in Class 1 and pupils in Years 5 and 6 have recently received invaluable experiences at Northampton's Learning Discovery Centre. Their successes when exploring robotics resulted in them demonstrating their achievements at the official opening. Pupils use the Internet satisfactorily to research information whether to extend their study of 'islands' in Year 2, or Victorian children by Year 6.
59. In discussion, higher attaining pupils of all ages shared their enjoyment for computers and were confident when demonstrating their knowledge of how to log on, access menus, save and print. They used the mouse and keyboard skills well. The subject is soundly managed on a temporary basis, with current developments taking place in improving assessment strategies. Many pupils are not clear what to do in order to improve their work.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

60. In the junior class, programs are used soundly to support individual learning in mental accuracy, spelling and reading skills. Search engines have been used to support pupils' investigations

about Victorian children, and pupils have added to their study of islands in Years 1 and 2. Older pupils use word processing skills appropriately to record their literacy skills.

HUMANITIES

61. No lessons were observed in **history** or **geography**, which were sampled and were not a focus for this inspection. The curricula in history and geography are broad and balanced, with each topic covered soundly. Good use is made of the local environment, and pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills to good effect. Pupils' work indicates a secure knowledge base but their historical and geographical skills are not as good as they should be. Systems for assessing how well pupils are doing are at an early stage and this is an area for development.

Religious education

Provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good and standards are higher than expected in the junior class.
- Pupils have a good understanding of Christianity and they know the main festivals and traditions of other main religions.
- There are limited systems for tracking pupils' progress and achievement.

Commentary

62. Good progress has been made since the last inspection when the school did not meet the requirements for teaching religious education, especially in Years 3 to 6. The weaknesses have been tackled well and there is an appropriate curriculum in place. The subject is well resourced. Standards, teaching and learning have improved significantly and pupils' achievement is good.

63. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have a secure body of knowledge about Christianity. They know the main festivals such as Easter and Christmas, and they have an understanding of the main stories in both the old and new testaments. Pupils enjoyed acting out the story of Palm Sunday as part of their Easter preparations. Pupils' work shows a developing awareness of Jesus' life and times, but there is little evidence of work being given more than a tick when it is marked. This limits pupils' awareness of what they need to do to improve their work.

64. Junior pupils, in Years 3 to 6, build on and extend their body of knowledge successfully, which they add to by studying aspects of Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. Traditions and festivals are understood well. Pupils have worked on a wide range of issues including relationships and they explore their attitudes about events and happenings. This gives them an additional insight into the underlying meaning of self-worth. Lessons are interesting because teaching is good and this ensures that learning is productive.

65. The subject leader has worked hard to move the subject forward. She is successful and the subject has a firm steer. The main issues to tackle are outlined above, mainly to improve marking in Years 1 and 2, and to strengthen the systems for assessing how well pupils are doing.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

66. Very few lessons were observed as these subjects were sampled in this inspection. Inspectors discussed these subjects with pupils and staff and examined pupils' work. It is not possible to make a judgement about provision on the basis of this evidence.

67. Pupils have a wide range of creative experiences and the school has worked hard to maintain this aspect of the curriculum. It is successful. Throughout the school pupils' early experiences

are built upon and developed well. Displays are bright and lively reflecting a wide range of experiences. Pupils explore colour, mix paint and blend pastels. They achieve well in three-dimensional work, and good use is made of art programs on the computer. Pupils' skills are developed well.

68. There was little evidence of work in design technology but pupils talked with great enthusiasm about their past work. Written recording, related to planning and evaluation of the finished product, is patchy and pupils' skills and understanding are inconsistent in the different classes.
69. The school works hard to make sure that its pupils have a full entitlement to physical education (PE). Recent links with the local secondary school mean that junior pupils now have gymnastic lessons in suitable accommodation. This is a significant improvement, as Harlestone school has no hall. Specialist teaching helps pupils to improve their skills, which are inadequate because of limited provision in the past. Infant pupils have their PE in a local primary school, which has good accommodation.
70. Pupils enjoy music and they sing enthusiastically in assembly. Singing is often accompanied by the school's recorder group, which adds an extra dimension to pupils' musical experiences. Parents spoke highly of the musical events produced by the school. They feel that these are valuable occasions for everyone to share.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and their families respect and value each other. The school is a harmonious community where everyone gets on well together.
- Pupils' personal development is good, and it underpins all aspects of the school's work.
- Pupils are learning to take care of themselves, to eat healthily, and to be confident young people.

Commentary

71. PSHCE is well provided for in this small school. Pupils are keen and eager to learn. They willingly share their ideas about relationships and they are confident when discussing them during 'Circle time'. PSHCE lessons follow a well planned structure in which older pupils are fully aware of gender stereotyping, as demonstrated in their lesson on the challenges facing them when they transfer to secondary school later this year.
72. Pupils learn how to take care of themselves when travelling into town or playing at home or in the playground. Class and school rules are decided in consultation with the pupils, and they are keen to implement them as they have 'ownership'. Pupils are fully aware of the importance of eating a healthy diet and taking exercise regularly. Good attention is paid to sex, drugs and relationship education, with good support from experts outside the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).