

Horton CofE VA Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109262
Local Authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	309945
Inspection date	12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Christine Huard

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 on roll	
School	40
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Peacock
Headteacher	Esme Hayball
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Horton Chipping Sodbury Bristol BS37 6QP
Telephone number	01454 318834
Fax number	01454 318834

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Some pupils attend this very small school from the village, but most travel in from the surrounding area. Attainment on entry into Reception varies from year to year between below average and average. The school has an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and an above average proportion of pupils with statements relating to these difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The pupils receive an excellent education in an exciting and inspirational learning environment. Being a small school in no way limits the opportunities available for its pupils. Staff ensure that an excellent range of activities is provided both in and out of school time to supplement the exciting and varied curriculum that is offered. The school's success is largely due to the dynamism and dedication of the headteacher. She provides very clear direction and has exceptionally high expectations for the pupils. Staff, governors, and parents, all of whom hold her in high esteem, share her positive approach and enthusiasm. One parent's comment reflects the view of many, 'The school is led and managed by the headteacher to an extremely high standard. We could not ask for more.'

Children receive a very good start to their education in Reception where there is outstanding provision in many areas. However, children do not have enough activities to choose from because they have no outdoor secure area in which they can work and play. Plans are in hand for this to be addressed. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 really sparkle. They attain well above average standards in a range of subjects, such as music, physical education, and history, as well as the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Work from last year's arts week was of exceptional quality. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very high and pupils exude confidence using computers for a range of purposes, such as researching independently, accessing a range of programs to help them, recording work, using spreadsheets as well as producing an excellent school newspaper.

The school carefully analyses its performance and takes rapid action to address any potential weaknesses before they develop into problems. The current focus is on writing and pupils' progress this year has been outstanding. A list of success criteria against which pupils can check their work is proving to be highly successful, as is the emphasis on 'powerful verbs', 'amazing adjectives' and 'precise nouns'. Lessons and learning are exciting. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, are confident, and use resources such as interactive whiteboards to make lessons interesting and explanations clearer for the pupils. Pupils are well motivated. They bubble with enthusiasm and are lively and responsive in class. Tasks are exciting and very well matched to individual needs. Pupils know their work is valued, so they take care with their presentation, striving to produce their best. Targets are precise and marking is excellent; this help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Pupils love coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They are exceptionally well cared for and feel safe. The excellent relationships between pupils and adults ensure that there is always someone in whom pupils can confide. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and, additionally, have an outstanding understanding of the need for emotional well-being. A conservation area which they maintain and fund raising for charity have helped make pupils conscious of their responsibilities to the wider world, whilst they willingly take on a range of tasks to help the school run more smoothly. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One comment reflects their views and that of the inspector, 'Horton is a great example of primary education at its best.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in Reception make very good progress and most join Year 1 having reached the goals appropriate for their age in most areas of learning. Teaching shows an excellent knowledge of the needs of young children, and planning in this class with its mixed age group is exceptionally good. It ensures the needs of both older and younger pupils are met. There is a good balance between activities led by the teacher and those which children choose. However, the current restrictions imposed by children not having a secure area of their own in which to work and play does, to a certain degree, inhibit their ability to gain independence. It also slightly limits the opportunities for physical development. The care and attention to pupils' welfare is outstanding. Progress is carefully monitored and assessed on a regular basis, which means activities are planned at the correct level to help pupils grow. Leadership and management are excellent. Monitoring of teaching, learning and planning ensures that these are maintained at a consistently high level thus enhancing learning opportunities for the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give Reception children more opportunities to make choices and develop independence by the provision of a secure outdoor area.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Small year groups mean that standards may vary from year to year but the school keeps meticulous and accurate records, which confirm that pupils make outstanding progress as they move through the school. The school sets demanding targets and it exceeded these last year. Achievement is outstanding because the school monitors its performance carefully; for example, monitoring identified performance in problem solving was slightly below other areas. The integration of a range of interesting practical activities into lessons has motivated and enthused pupils and has raised standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve exceptionally well because of the very high quality support they receive. Similarly, pupils who are especially gifted or talented are well challenged both in the classroom and in many out of school activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent behaviour, respect for each other, and enthusiastic responses in the classroom all demonstrate pupils' sheer enjoyment of school. Pupils unreservedly say it is a happy and harmonious place. Attendance is good. It has improved considerably because of the actions taken by the school. However, it is still affected by the actions of a very few parents taking children out of school for term time holidays. The exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development reflects the strong Christian ethos of the school. The school council is very effective in representing pupils' views and bringing about change. For example, councillors were consulted over how the limited space in the playground should be organised, and they decide which charities to support. Pupils make a valued contribution to the community and take on a wide range of responsibilities. They have to apply for positions, such as that of 'spider catcher', and go through an interview prior to appointment. This process, together with the emphasis on

working together and team building skills in the curriculum, as well as a very good grounding in basic skills, ensure that pupils have an excellent preparation for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers show flair and imagination in their planning and work hard to make learning relevant and fun for the pupils. They ensure that pupils know what they are learning and why. Good subject knowledge gives them the confidence to be adventurous in the classroom. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve and match tasks carefully to individual needs. Pupils tackle tasks set with vigour and enthusiasm. Practical activities encourage them to think through problems for themselves and develop good independent learning skills. They respond to questions thoughtfully and are encouraged to explore and share ideas with each other. Teaching assistants are very well deployed and provide excellent support, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils particularly appreciate the conscientious and comprehensive marking, which clearly explains what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The lively and diverse curriculum is designed to promote enjoyment of learning in all areas and makes a substantial contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development. Although there is an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills, the arts and sport also have a high profile. In addition, French is taught throughout the school. An outstanding range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum. Planting hedges to preserve the habitat of dormice was just one activity undertaken last winter. Others included visits to Dyrham Park to support work in history and working with tree sculptors. Strong links with the local secondary school provide outstanding opportunities for curriculum enrichment and an excellent preparation for pupils' next stage of education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The procedures in place to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure at all times are outstanding. Close relationships are established with parents before children start school and are very effective in promoting care and well-being, and enjoyment of school. Pupils' personal development is closely monitored throughout their time at the school. Teachers are very good at involving pupils in evaluating their own progress and their own ways of learning and this all feeds into the excellent target setting process. As a result, pupils understand what they have already achieved and what they can do to improve. Parents recognise and appreciate the outstanding care and support. As one parent said, 'My children thrive here because of the support they receive.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

All members of the school community share the commitment to continual improvement. Everyone lives the school's vision of 'High Standards and Caring'. The school thrives on challenge, sets demanding, but achievable, targets and is constantly seeking to move forward. Teamwork is excellent. All staff have multiple responsibilities. These are organised so competently and efficiently that staff are not overburdened and are thus able to perform to a consistently high level. Governors show an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide exceptional support and challenge. The school knows how well it is doing, although its self-evaluation is a little cautious. The chair of governors explained this by saying, 'Just because we are on the right track doesn't mean we can sit back. There is always something to develop or improve.' There is an outstanding capacity for further improvement. Parents feel involved and are overwhelmingly enthusiastic in their support of the school. The most frequent comment heard by the inspector was, 'We couldn't have chosen a better school for our children.'

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you really enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. I think your school gives you an excellent education and is working hard to make it even better.

These are the things I liked best. ?Your behaviour is excellent and you are really keen and enthusiastic about your learning. ?You are all doing very well in English, mathematics and science and in many other subjects as well. ?You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise. ?Teachers make learning interesting and fun for you, and you know how to improve your work from marking and target setting. ?You have an outstanding and varied curriculum and the special activities arranged to enhance it are excellent. Your work from the Arts Week is stunning. ?The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school. ?Your headteacher and governors lead the school extremely well and are very keen to make it even better.

There is only one small area that could be a little better.

?The children in Reception do not yet have a secure play area of their own and this means they don't get enough opportunities to make choices about what they want to do and develop their independence.

I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.



13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Horton CE (VA) Primary School, Chipping Sodbury BS37 6QP

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These are the things I liked best.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you are really keen and enthusiastic about your learning.
- You are all doing very well in English, mathematics and science and in many other subjects as well.
- You take very seriously the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise.
- Teachers make learning interesting and fun for you, and you know how to improve your work from marking and target setting.
- You have an outstanding and varied curriculum and the special activities arranged to enhance it are excellent. Your work from the Arts Week is stunning.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher and governors lead the school extremely well and are very keen to make it even better.

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I am glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Christine Huard
Lead inspector