

Harlestone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121826
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314113
Inspection date	12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

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	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	L Ashton-Davies
Headteacher	Linda Wood
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Church Lane Lower Harlestone Northampton NN7 4EN
Telephone number	01604 842391
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Harlestone is a small rural school with two classes; one for pupils aged 4 to 7 and one for pupils aged 7 to 11. Most pupils come from the outskirts of Northampton and are from a White British background. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. About one quarter of all the pupils have learning difficulties. These are mostly for moderate learning difficulties or speech and language difficulties.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Harlestone is a satisfactory school. It has a number of good features. The headteacher and her dedicated team of staff know all of the pupils well and together they have created a calm, happy and purposeful atmosphere. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are particularly appreciative of the caring ethos which enables pupils to enjoy school so much that they behave in an exemplary way. Reflecting the views of many others, one parent said, 'It is a happy school with happy children and all staff are on hand to listen to any problems and deal with them accordingly.'

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, manage classes well and provide interesting activities that generate enthusiasm. However, information collected from the assessment of learning is not consistently thorough and accurate enough to raise expectations of pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and for higher achieving pupils. Consequently, the pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress. Data about how much progress pupils have made over a key stage is not used well enough to evaluate their progress and to raise expectations where necessary.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Strong links with parents mean that on entry, children are quick to settle happily into school life. They make satisfactory progress and start Year 1 with broadly average standards. Although progress in reading in Years 1 and 2 has improved because of the school's increased emphasis on phonics, progress in mathematics and particularly in writing is not as strong. Progress through the rest of the school is satisfactory so that pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Although school data shows that standards have improved this year, with more pupils working towards the higher Level 5 standard, the school is still not likely to meet its suitably challenging targets in English or for these higher levels in both mathematics and English.

The school successfully promotes pupils' good personal development because of good care, guidance and support. Pupils form very good relationships with each other and with staff. They play and work together happily and have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, joining in physical activities such as 'Activate' with particular enthusiasm. Pupils benefit from a satisfactory curriculum, which manages to cater for all of the different age groups in each class but does not always provide the extra challenge or opportunities for higher achieving pupils.

Governors play an active part in the life and work of the school. They work hard together with the school to promote the personal development of pupils and to create a sense of common purpose. Although leaders have identified the right areas for development, they do not have a long-term strategic plan and do not use data on pupils' standards and achievement sufficiently to set clear and measurable targets for improvement. Consequently, the school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enjoy their first experiences of school because they are surrounded by the warm encouragement of all adults. Typically, they enter the school with the skills expected for children of a similar age; however, the phonic and writing skills of the current Reception children were not as strong on entry as skills in other areas. The school adopts a suitably flexible approach to meeting each child's needs during the Reception Year. They may learn alongside older pupils

or separately, with teachers and teaching assistants deployed accordingly. Children benefit from well-planned opportunities to explore and experiment. Adults interact well with the children in order to promote their learning; consequently, children are confident and talk enthusiastically about the activities that they undertake. However, opportunities for child-initiated activities are limited within the confines of a mixed age class and although there is a small covered outdoor area, activities are restricted in bad weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of data to evaluate the progress of individual pupils and of groups more accurately, and to set higher expectations where necessary.
- Devise a long-term strategic plan, containing measurable targets linked to the improvement of achievement and standards.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement for pupils throughout the school is satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entry, whether this is at the statutory starting age or later. Some pupils make good progress. This is true for some of those whose education has got off to a slow start elsewhere because they have learning difficulties. These pupils benefit from the individual support and nurture that the school provides and as a result, they make good progress.

With very small numbers taking national tests, results fluctuate considerably from year to year. School data shows that standards have improved this year. Although writing remains the weaker subject across the school. Pupils' attainment in reading in Years 1 and 2 has improved as a direct result of the school's increased emphasis on phonics. The number of pupils expected to achieve higher levels at the end of Year 6 has also increased. However, the school is still not likely to meet its targets for the higher levels in both English and mathematics, or for English as a whole.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the outstanding way in which they behave and the very good relationships that they enjoy with each other and with adults. When one pupil said, 'What I like best about this school is that it is like a big family'; others nodded in agreement. Pupils are confident that there is no bullying. They feel safe in school and say there is always someone to turn to if there is a problem. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means they work and play harmoniously together.

Although there is no school council, pupils raise issues on the suggestions board. In this way, things that are important to them, such as improvements to the cloakrooms, are brought about. Links with the community are good. Years 5 and 6 have tea with the elderly and pupils raise funds for Macmillan Nurses through 'The Big Hush' or for Comic Relief on 'Red Nose Day'. Pupils know about the importance of healthy eating and regularly participate in exercise. Attendance is average but, despite the school's efforts, the figures suffer the adverse effect of a minority of families who take time off during term time. Pupils' satisfactory grasp of basic

skills and their ability to work co-operatively mean they are adequately prepared for the next stage in their schooling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are calm, happy and purposeful events and so pupils have positive approach to learning. Skilled teaching assistants play an important part in pupils' learning. They work well with teachers to support pupils of different abilities, especially those with learning difficulties.

However, not all pupils are making as much progress as they could. Teachers have a good idea about individual pupils' progress on a day-to-day basis, but do not have a secure picture over a longer period of time. This means that work is not always well enough matched to what pupils need in order for them to make really good progress and fulfil their potential.

Teachers provide interesting activities that pupils really enjoy and use their own good subject knowledge to question pupils effectively in order to promote learning. Pupils are beginning to become involved in assessing their own learning. Although most feel that they are learning as much as they can, some say that they could do better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The three-year rolling programme is suitable for the different age groups within each class, although it does not always afford the extra challenge and opportunities for higher achieving pupils. Well-planned strategies to support pupils with learning difficulties help them to make good progress. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education gives pupils a clear understanding of the need for safety, exercise and healthy living. Working towards gaining a Healthy Schools award has also helped to enhance pupils' understanding of what they need to do to stay safe and keep healthy.

Pupils benefit from enrichment activities, most of which take part during the school day. The nature of the school accommodation and the difficulties of rural transport limit the practicality of after-school activities. The amount of physical education that the school provides is limited by the school's accommodation. However, valuable links with other schools and organisations supplement the school's own limited resources to ensure a broad curriculum, extend pupils' opportunities, and make a positive contribution to the wider community beyond their small school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel well cared for and thrive in this nurturing environment. There is a good level of support for vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties. Pupils' individual targets are clear and regularly reviewed. The school works closely with parents and with other agencies to make sure that these pupils make good progress. All staff are committed to promoting pupils' health and safety and all safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Pupils have a good understanding of how to improve their work. They know their targets and they understand what success criteria are because they regularly assess whether they have met the success

criteria for their group. Teachers' marking is effective and contributes well to pupils' understanding of how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher leads a supportive team of staff who are united in their firm commitment to providing a safe and happy learning environment, where all pupils are valued. However, the long-term evaluation of pupils' progress is not sufficiently thorough or accurate. This means that at times, not enough is expected of pupils, especially those capable of achieving the higher levels, in order to help them fulfil their potential.

The school has strong links with parents and other agencies and this has a positive impact on the creation of a strong, closely-knit community. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is well led by the headteacher. Governors are helpful supporters of the school and are regularly involved in its activities. They are knowledgeable because they are closely involved with the school and are developing their skills in finding out for themselves how well the school is performing.

The school has identified the main areas to work on to raise standards and improve achievement. Nevertheless, the development plan is not explicit and does not have clear or measurable targets. Whilst self-evaluation activities are carried out, and have helped to identify where improvements are needed, they are not yet sharp enough to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses in enough detail. The current plan does not set out the school's strategy for raising standards over the long term.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harlestone Primary School, Lower Harlestone, Northampton NN7 4EN.

I really enjoyed coming to your school the other day to find out how well you are doing. You told me how much you really enjoy coming to school and that most of you feel that your teachers make you work hard. I think that your school gives you a satisfactory education and has several good features. The good things I found were:

- You really are like one big, happy family and you get on with each other very well.
- You know how to treat people with respect and your behaviour is outstanding.
- The teachers look after you very well.
- The school provides some interesting activities for you to do.
- Pupils who find learning difficult do very well.

The school is working hard to make things even better for you. I have asked the school to do three things to help you:

- I know that the teachers have a good idea about your own progress in the class, but I think it would be helpful if they took a wider look at how quickly different groups of you learn. That way they could make sure everybody is doing the best they can, all of the time.
- It would be helpful if the school uses the information it collects on how well you do to set a clear and detailed plan that will make things even better.
- It would also be helpful if the school made sure that that plan is not just for one year, but for the next few years ahead.

I hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and to try your hardest so that you are successful in the future. Remember that it is important that you attend as often as you possibly can if you are to do your very best.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Atcheson Lead inspector

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Lead inspector