

Hornton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122991
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327824
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Pye

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	78
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Duncan Raper
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Childs
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Lane Hornton Banbury OX15 6BZ
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The pupils in this smaller than average village primary school come from predominantly White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals is well below that expected nationally. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties varies year-on-year, but is currently average, and there are two pupils with statements of educational needs. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning or speech and language difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is delivered through the Partnership Foundation Stage Unit, which includes a privately run pre-school. In recent times there has been considerable disruption to the normal life of the school because of building works, and the absence of the headteacher. The school has been recognised nationally through the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. There are a number of good aspects to its work. It maximises the advantages of its small size so that the pupils are very well known by adults, and the level of pastoral care is outstanding. Pupils tell of enjoying the varied activities on offer. The curriculum is good, and pupils benefit from the wide range of partnerships established with the local community and other schools. The personal development of pupils is good, and they develop well as independent learners. Pupils are soundly prepared for their future lives, although more could be done to promote team work and involve pupils in activities that promote enterprise skills.

Small cohorts make comparisons with national data problematical. However, in work seen, standards are above average. Given their starting points, this reflects satisfactory achievement for pupils by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Reading standards are above average and many pupils make good progress. Writing standards in recent years have been below average, particularly for high attainers. The school has taken action, for example in the recent introduction of a reading hour where teachers work with small groups. Older pupils help younger ones, and together they develop a deeper understanding of vocabulary and what good writing looks like. Writing standards in the 2008 national tests at the end of Year 6 were above average - an improvement. At the whole-school level, the current system of tracking pupils' progress does not easily allow teachers and senior leaders to have a more ongoing overview of progress. Consequently, it is difficult to establish whether pupils are on track to meet their targets, and to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are good elements. Questioning is used well to ensure pupils' understanding. However, there are inconsistencies that result in pupils' progress slowing in certain cases; assessment information is not always used well enough to plan work that challenges pupils of all abilities. Additionally, the quality of planning varies, with missed opportunities to address issues such as how all subjects can support literacy, or to identify specific pupil groups and thereby plan appropriate work for them.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's and her deputy's knowledge of the pupils is used well. Adults care for pupils extremely well, but accompanying this is a clear focus on improving academic achievement. One parent wrote, 'There is a real nurturing environment at the school. I have seen my children's confidence grow.' The school is very inclusive. Attempts have been made through newsletters and the use of email to forge links with parents. However, many parents expressed a view that communication could be improved. The school acknowledges this, and that it particularly needs to involve parents from surrounding villages.

A regular cycle of monitoring and evaluation is in place. During the absence of the headteacher, a one-year school development plan has been in operation. There is no long-term view of development, nor a consistent use of measurable success criteria against which the school can judge the impact of its work.

Governance is satisfactory. A number of new governors are developing a deeper understanding of their roles, and they are well supported by knowledgeable and more experienced governors who know the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, there is still not a sufficiently close focus on achievement and standards to enable them to hold the school more effectively to account.

Since the last inspection, the school has put into place effective measures to broaden pupils' understanding of cultural diversity. This has included celebrations of the Chinese New Year and the introduction of multicultural stories. The experienced headteacher is now back in school and is overseeing the drive to continue to improve writing standards. Challenging targets are being set. These aspects, together with high reading standards and the effective development of the Partnership Foundation Stage Unit, reflect a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The development of the Partnership Foundation Stage Unit has been well managed. One result is that the children benefit from a very smooth transition from pre-school to Reception, and have a range of good resources and opportunities. One parent wrote, 'Being within the setting is a factor in the range of activities on offer and in the balance of more formal teaching, and learning through play.' The children make good progress, and most leave Reception with above the expected levels of skills, knowledge and understanding. Entry levels vary, but are usually just above the expected levels, with weaknesses in writing, calculation and in linking sounds and letters. These areas are well addressed through a good curriculum that also allows for an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning. Teachers' planning, including for learning in the external area, does not sufficiently show what learning is expected of different ability groups. Children demonstrate good levels of personal development, sharing toys and equipment, and moving around with consideration for others. They achieve well because teaching is good. Skilful questioning helps to encourage deeper thought. Children showed their willingness to get involved and their enjoyment of school when acting out domestic chores. The teacher linked the learning well to real life when raising the risks of hot irons. One child showed their understanding when she cried out, 'Ooh, I've burnt myself!' Leadership and management are good, and welfare issues are very well addressed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable teachers and managers to more easily and consistently track pupils' standards and progress, and to quickly identify when pupils are not meeting their targets.
- Develop more long-term school and subject development planning, with measurable success criteria against which to judge the effect of new initiatives.
- Ensure that inconsistencies in teaching, regarding planning and the use of assessment to plan work for pupils of different abilities, particularly in writing, are eradicated.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In the 2008 national assessments at the end of Year 2, pupils attained standards that were average, although reading was above the national average. This reflects the school's focus on developing reading so as to encourage better standards of writing. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing remained below that expected. In 2008 the school exceeded its targets for older pupils because they attained above-average standards by the end of Year 6. Given their starting points, this constituted satisfactory progress. Reading was a particular strength, with over 80% of the pupils attaining the higher Level 5. Pupils with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities attain well, mainly as a consequence of some highly focused additional support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. The cultural education of pupils is well enhanced by, for example, the music input across the school. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect during assemblies, and a good sense of community and shared values is established. A parent wrote, 'It is a happy school. The children genuinely seem to look after one another and help each other during lessons.' Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe, often because relevant messages are reinforced in many subjects. For example, in science pupils kept a diary of what they ate, and then converted the data into a pie graph to see the balance of their diet. Pupils behave well. A few parents expressed concerns about behaviour; the school has already reviewed and introduced a new behaviour policy. Pupils say they feel safe and that any incidents are quickly dealt with. The school council allows older pupils to contribute satisfactorily to their community. However, the membership of the council is too restricted, and younger pupils do not access sufficient decision-making opportunities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are a number of good aspects. Relationships in lessons are very positive. Pupils involve themselves well in lessons and want to learn. However, their progress slows when lesson planning insufficiently identifies what learning is expected of pupils with different abilities. This is particularly evident in writing, where opportunities to challenge higher attainers are missed. Lessons run smoothly because of good organisation. Also, the teachers make clear the objectives of the lesson, and consequently pupils know what they are expected to learn. When planning lessons across the curriculum, there are missed opportunities to reinforce literacy skills through identifying where pupils' vocabulary and writing skills could be further extended. Teachers mark regularly, and their comments are supportive. However, not all pupils are given a clear understanding about how to improve their work, although the targets in the snapshot reports have begun to address this.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is very good enhancement of the curriculum within this small school, with yoga, art, sports and music clubs, and a programme of visits. Pupils visit museums, participate in musical concerts and make increasing use of the locality. In particular, the school has made good efforts to make up for the lack of space for physical education through hiring a local hall, and using specialist coaches and the local playing field. The national Activemark award recognises this commitment. The school regularly reviews the curriculum; a new mathematics scheme has recently been introduced to reflect the new demands of the numeracy curriculum. However, the school has yet to identify through a whole-school audit where writing is supported in subjects other than literacy. There is a good emphasis on investigations in science, which helps to make learning easier for many pupils. A new programme of study that meets the emotional needs of pupils has been introduced, and the pupils have opportunities to discuss any issues

with a counsellor as well as in circle time (supervised discussions in which children can speak openly).

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The pastoral care of pupils is outstanding. Adults know the pupils very well and this undoubtedly contributes to the pupils' good personal development. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to approach if they have a problem. Child protection and safeguarding measures are in place. Careful attention to attendance helps to ensure that good levels are maintained, and this also reflects how well pupils enjoy school. Pupils have targets set for them in literacy and numeracy, and use them to improve their work. They are particularly motivated by 'minute maths', where they can clearly see on the progress ladder how quickly they are improving. There is an established assessment cycle and teachers record frequently how well pupils are achieving. However, the arrangements for tracking pupils' progress at the whole-school level do not make it easy to identify any underachievement. The professional development of teaching assistants helps ensure that pupils requiring additional support and specialist intervention do well. The recent introduction of snapshot reports gives a good level of information about pupils' levels, their progress and how they can progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has given a clear direction for school development and has distributed responsibility widely. Consequently, during her absence the deputy headteacher was able to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Some effective monitoring takes place - for example, the need to improve sentence structure was identified and linked to improving writing standards. However, coordinator roles are insufficiently developed to enable them to more regularly observe lessons and to gain an overview of standards and achievement levels. The quality of evaluation, particularly of assessment information, is insufficiently detailed at both whole-school and subject level. School self-evaluation is satisfactory and has led to some appropriate development planning, which is well linked to the continued professional development of staff. However, there is a need for a more strategic plan to be developed. The use of more measurable success criteria would enable the school to more accurately judge the impact of its work. Governors gain good knowledge of the school and pupils because, for example, they are attached to one class and follow that class throughout the school.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hornton Primary School, Banbury, OX15 6BZ

Thank you for your warm welcome when I visited your school recently. I listened carefully to what you had to say, and a particular thank you to the two groups of children with whom I spoke.

I believe that yours is a satisfactory school. This means that it does some things well and that there are some things it could do better.

The school provides you with a good range of activities. You told me how you enjoy your visits to places like museums, the clubs like yoga, and the practical work you have in subjects like science. You also told me, and I could see for myself, that you get along well together. You are polite, show respect for each other and are well behaved. You told me that there are occasional problems, but that you know you can go to an adult and that the school acts quickly to help. You have a good understanding about how to stay healthy and safe. The adults care for you extremely well.

The children in Reception get off to a good start. This contributes to you wanting to learn and do well. This shows in your good attendance rate - keep this up! Your school also uses its links well with other schools for your benefit.

All schools can improve, and I have asked your school to look at three things. First, that it introduces a system that makes it easier to follow your progress, and identify who needs additional support. Second, to develop more long-term plans for the future development of the school, and make it easier for managers to judge how good these plans are in helping you to progress and improve standards. Third, to ensure that teachers use the information they have on your progress to plan work that sufficiently challenges you.

Thank you again, and I wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Michael Pye

Lead Inspector