

Hardwick Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124561
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	314965
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	192
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	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Heavisides
Headteacher	Mr Peter Dewhurst
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Steward Road Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP33 2PW
Telephone number	01284755424
Fax number	01284765311

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school has an attached unit for 15 pupils with specific speech and language difficulties in classes from Reception to Year 2. As a result, more pupils than nationally receive support for their learning and the number of pupils with a statement for their special educational need is well above the national average. Free school meal eligibility is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British backgrounds, although nearly 10% are at an early stage of learning English. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is through a part time Nursery class and a Reception class, which children enter at the start of the term in which they become five. The school has the Activemark award in recognition of its successful provision for physical education and sport. The school hosts a committee-run club before and after school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The headteacher, staff and governors are accurate in their view that this is a good school. It is particularly successful in extending pupils' experiences and promoting their personal development through the rich and vibrant curriculum and in the provision of a wide range of additional activities and clubs. Parents share this view and are very happy with the school and all that it does for their children. 'Quite simply a lovely family community school' is one parent's view, shared by many.

The school gives pupils a very firm base for success in the next stage of their education. The headteacher has high expectations of what can be achieved. He sets challenging goals for all and checks carefully that any support given leads to improvement. All adults have a very clear picture of each pupil's qualities from which they adapt work to meet their individual learning needs. This is particularly true for pupils new to English, those with speech and language difficulties or pupils with particular talents. Hence, there is little chance of pupils slipping through the net and not meeting their targets.

In spite of the school's success, there is no complacency. This is best seen through the current priority of making good teaching even better so that teachers can push pupils' learning forward even more rapidly. Interesting and lively teaching, backed up by effective support staff, motivates the pupils who are keen to succeed. These factors account for their good achievement. Pupils make good progress. Standards are above average by the end of Year 4, and very high in reading. However, the more able boys do not achieve as well as they might in their writing.

Parents are delighted with the way the school looks after their children. One parent reflected the views of many when writing, 'the school is a happy, caring environment for the children, which helps to develop their independence and respect for others.' The pupils know that their well-being is given the highest priority and they trust the adults around them. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They behave exceptionally well at all times, attend regularly and their relative maturity and consideration for each other adds much to the school's calm, positive and purposeful atmosphere. The strong emphasis on sport, supported by close links with other schools, and the emphasis on nutrition helps the pupils gain an excellent understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Their contribution to the school and wider community is immense. They thrive on the responsibilities they undertake around the school.

The words of one parent that 'the school has gone from strength to strength under the headteacher' sum up the reasons for the school's success. The headteacher is aided in driving the school forward by strong teamwork from teachers, support staff and governors. All have a good understanding of the school's current qualities and the priorities for the next stage of its development. An impressive record of securing improvement since the previous inspection has thus been achieved. The school is well placed to achieve its aim of becoming better in all that it does.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the EYFS classes. Good leadership, based on close teamwork, has set a clear direction for continued development. Staff check on the impact of provision and continually search for ways to improve. All adults work well together to ease the children's arrival. The children work and play happily together, form constructive relationships

and develop confidence. By noting carefully how well each child is progressing, teachers are able to adapt activities to meet individual needs. The balance between tasks led by adults and activities developed by the children themselves helps to move learning forward and develops their independence, although, at times, adults do not stand back enough and let the children develop their own ideas. From skills that are below those expected for their age on entry, children make good progress and most reach their expected goals by the time they leave the Reception class. Girls do better than boys in writing while the opposite is the case in calculating. Action has started to reduce this gap. Teachers' planning links all areas of learning with the new and highly stimulating outside classroom. Children of Reception age in the speech and language unit also make good progress. Their induction is handled sensitively so that children and parents all feel confident that this is the best place for them. One problem identified by the school is that the unit's location means these children do not have the same level of access to the outside area as others in the EYFS. This limits their opportunity to link smoothly all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable the more able boys to reach higher standards in their writing.
- Give the youngest children in the speech and language unit similar access as other EYFS children to a stimulating outside learning environment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils in Years 1 to 4 build well on their good start in the EYFS. Virtually all pupils in the main school reached or exceeded nationally expected standards in their Year 2 assessments in 2007. Their good progress continues so that standards are well above average by the time they move on to middle school at the end of Year 4. All but a very few pupils meet, and many exceed, their challenging targets. Reading is a real area of strength, although writing, mathematics and science are not far behind. The weaker area for the more able boys is the structure of their writing. The school is already giving this matter attention by finding scenarios for writing that boys find more stimulating. Pupils with specific speech and language needs also make good progress towards their individual targets, even if they do not always reach nationally expected levels by the time they return to their local schools at the end of Year 2. The expertise of support staff does much to aid the good progress of pupils who need help either with their learning or language development.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners. They are thoughtful and considerate individuals who show a genuine concern for the well-being of others. Pupils who join the school with limited or no English and those with additional speech and language needs are welcomed and they rapidly settle in and make friends. The school celebrates cultural diversity. Hence, pupils show considerable respect for others and gain a perceptive understanding of modern Britain, their part in the wider world and their responsibility towards others. Pupils are very keen to lead a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy sport and Year 4 pupils help to run the healthy tuck shop. Pupils behave very sensibly and safely, making an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through schemes such as the school council and playground squad. They raise significant funds for charity and perform at nearby residential homes for senior citizens.

These factors all contribute to the pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their impressive personal skills, excellent ability to use initiative as well as readiness to work as part of a team, coupled with their good basic skills, prepare them extremely well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Classrooms are orderly and pupils are well managed because teachers show they have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Pupils enjoy lessons and are keen to learn. They relish the opportunity to work with their partners to rehearse their ideas before sharing them with the whole class. Teachers make their lessons interesting by using new technology and other resources. They adapt their methods and the tasks they employ to challenge the more able and give confidence when learning is not easy. Learning benefits considerably from the skilled input of support staff. They play a valuable role, particularly when working with pupils who need extra guidance. Questions usually keep the pupils on their toes, but teachers do not always use these to help pupils share their own ideas and consolidate their understanding. This is largely when they do not strike an appropriate balance between questions requiring a short response and those where a more detailed answer is demanded.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very sharply focused on meeting pupils' learning needs and adds considerably to their personal development and enjoyment of school. All basic skills receive very good attention. In addition, there is an increasingly strong emphasis on linking learning across subjects and all pupils learn French. Many interesting and exciting activities extend the pupils' experiences both during and beyond the school day. Pupils hugely enjoy events such as French Day and 'Healthy Living' week, which includes sports day. The school makes sure pupils have every opportunity to become fit and healthy, through the many sports clubs and participation in local competitions. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 go swimming and the oldest pupils have a residential visit to an outdoor activity centre. Music also plays an important part in the school life and all pupils have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. Pupils with particular talents are well catered for through this breadth of activity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare are thorough and effective. Close links with a wide range of health and other professionals and external agencies help the school to provide all pupils with strong support. Pupils new to English and those who need additional support to help them learn are very well looked after. Individual attention and regular sessions with the speech therapist support the good progress of the pupils with speech and language difficulties. This high standard of care and guidance underpins pupils' outstanding personal development and creates a calm and very happy environment for learning. Pupils' academic development is closely monitored and assessment information is used to identify pupils who are doing particularly well, as well as those at risk of not doing their best; in both cases, teachers provide good support. Pupils generally understand how to use their learning targets in reading, writing

and mathematics to help them progress, but lesson objectives do not always give them criteria by which to judge if these targets are being successfully achieved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is highly effective and is ably supported by other senior leaders. He has established a strong staff team, sharply focused on the achievement and personal development of each child and on the drive for improvement. This is demonstrated by the commitment of everyone to make good teaching even better. There is a very positive atmosphere in school, in which everyone is valued. The headteacher's approach is to involve staff, parents, governors and pupils as much as possible in sharing his vision for the future. The school understands the needs of its community well and works closely with local groups to help bring people together. The headteacher has developed the leadership skills of other teachers, who have reached the point where they can now take greater responsibility for performance in their areas of responsibility. Staff and governors have a clear view of the school's qualities. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on robust systems to check performance, including a careful analysis of assessment data. This gives a secure base from which to plan for the school's future. The influence and impact of governors has expanded in recent years. They have strong systems for scrutinising the performance of the school and for setting challenging targets for its improvement.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	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
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	2
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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

16 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hardwick Primary School, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2PW

You will probably remember that we visited your school recently and I am now writing to let you know what we found out. Before I do, I would just like to say thank you for making us feel welcome and for being so ready to share your thoughts about your school. We had a chance to talk to quite a lot of you and we have told your teachers how you were very helpful and polite. Through our discussions with you, it was great to hear how much you enjoy school. It was also good to hear about how safe you feel in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you are worried.

Hardwick Primary is a good school with several impressive things about it, not the least of which is your excellent behaviour. Teachers and support staff care for you well and make learning very enjoyable through the wide range of clubs and other activities. The school is excellent at helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. Your teachers and other staff make learning interesting. They are also good at helping those of you who find learning difficult. Most of you reach the standards expected of you by the time you leave and many of you do better than this, particularly in reading.

Even a good school like yours can improve. We have asked your teachers to expect higher standards of writing from some boys. We have also asked them to find ways for the youngest children in the speech and language unit to benefit from similar experiences as those in Class 2, particularly by having better access to the new outdoor learning area.

The staff and governors want the school to continue to be successful and we know you will play your part by continuing to behave so well and working so hard. We wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector