

Harlestone Primary School

Church Lane, Lower Harlestone, Northampton, NN7 4EN

Inspection dates 19–20 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well. Under the headteacher's good leadership, the school has made good progress since its last inspection.
- Good management of teaching has improved its quality. Lessons are made interesting and pupils are well motivated to learn.
- Pupils behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- The subjects taught are thoughtfully planned so that the pupils make good gains in their understanding. They apply their writing skills well across different subjects.
- Staff provide an attractive and welcoming environment. The school is a happy place and pupils look forward to each new day. They enjoy their learning and get along very well together.
- The federation of the two schools has begun well. Staff are increasing their skills by learning from one another.
- The governing body has a good range of skills which are used well in its management of the two schools.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and are pleased with their children's progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not attain as highly in reading as they do in writing and mathematics.
- The staff do not have enough responsibility for subjects across the federation to guide practice across the two schools.
- The wording of targets agreed with teachers as part of their annual appraisals are not always clear enough and so the success of teachers' endeavours towards them cannot always be measured.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited eight lessons or parts of lessons. Three of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- He examined the 10 responses on Parent View, the government's website for parents' views of schools, and also the school's most recent survey of parents' opinions.
- A discussion was held with a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- A group discussion was held with pupils.
- The inspector held several meetings with the headteacher.
- He examined progress data and other school documentation, including safeguarding information.
- A meeting took place with the Chair of the Governing Body, which manages the federation of the two schools.

Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school with two classes. One class contains children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, and the other class has pupils from Year 3 to Year 6.
- Since November 2011, the school has been formally linked with another village primary school under the same executive headteacher and known as a federation of schools. There had previously been an informal arrangement between the two schools for one year.
- Children begin the Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday. A large majority of children have previously attended some form of pre-school provision.
- All pupils are White British.
- The school currently supports a below average proportion of its pupils at school action and school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is much lower than the national average. This is extra government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in the care of the local authority and those from families with a parent in the armed forces,
- With only two pupils in Year 6 in 2012, the school's most recent results cannot be compared with the government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, because there were not enough pupils to make such a comparison meaningful.
- The school manages its own breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' reading skills further so that attainment is as high as that in writing and mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' comprehension skills, especially in looking more deeply and carefully at the meaning of the text they read
 - bringing together the staff from the two federated schools so that they learn from one another's successes and approaches to the teaching of reading
 - keeping the new materials purchased to support the reading of pupils with special educational needs under review to ensure that they support the pupils' progress in reading.
- Ensure that individual staff are developed professionally by being given responsibility to oversee and influence the work in key areas of learning across the federation.
- Make sure that the targets which are agreed as a result of teachers' appraisals are always written in terms which enable the amount of success towards them to be judged.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's attainment when they start school varies from year to year because of very small numbers in each year group. Analysis of individual children's attainment indicates that they make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In 2012, these children's attainment was above the national average.
- Numbers of pupils in Key Stage 1 are too small to compare their attainment meaningfully with national data but they show that each pupil has made good progress. Results have risen in the past two years in reading, writing and mathematics. Writing is particularly strong because the teachers provide very interesting lessons which motivate the pupils to write. In one lesson, a member of staff, dressed up as a lost star, suddenly appeared amidst twinkling lights. The pupils asked 'it' questions. They then wrote a letter to send to space so that the star could be rescued. Reception children sent off their messages attached to balloons.
- Improving rates of progress are filtering rapidly through to Key Stage 2. Current rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics in each year group in Key Stage 2 are good and generally best in writing. These big improvements have still to show through into above average attainment by the end of Year 6 where results have varied from year to year due to small numbers.
- The percentage of pupils who reached the pass mark for the Year 1 phonics screening test in 2012 was well above the national average. During the inspection, Year 1 pupils made good use of their skills in recognising letters and sounds (phonics) when reading more difficult words. However, reading is not as strong as writing in end of key stage assessments because pupils' comprehension skills are not yet finely tuned enough. Key Stage 2 pupils do not always read deeply enough into what the text is saying.
- Very few pupils in the school are entitled to pupil premium funding but they are all doing well in comparison with pupils elsewhere in the school who are not entitled to this funding.
- The very few pupils who have special educational needs are making similarly good rates of progress to other pupils in writing and mathematics, although their progress in reading is not as rapid. New resources being trialled for these pupils have not yet had their full impact on reading improvement.
- Pupils speak confidently in front of others and listen well to their teachers and to what others say. They make good use of computers and tablet computers when undertaking their studies. Key Stage 2 pupils show good skills in researching information for their various studies.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good and occasionally outstanding teaching promotes pupils' learning well. It is marked by well-planned and interesting lessons which motivate the pupils to work hard. Pupils are eager writers as a result of the imaginative ways in which they are stimulated to write. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 wrote persuasively to 'a panel' having received 'a letter from Queen Victoria' so that an aspect of their work during their Victorian studies could be included in the 'Great Exhibition'.
- Lessons are well prepared with learning resources and activities so that time is used well. A strong feature of lessons is the way in which teachers seek the pupils' ideas and value them,

sometimes adopting them into the learning. Reception and Year 1 and 2 pupils were keen to suggest how to help the lost star and the idea to send their messages by balloon came directly from the pupils.

- A particularly good feature of teaching is the way in which teachers move around the class when the pupils are undertaking their activities, ensuring that pupils understand what they are doing and sorting out any difficulties straightaway so that the pupils are not wasting any time.
- Marking is good. It recognises the aspects that the pupils have done well and provides a point for improvement. Pupils say, 'We know how we are getting on and how we can improve.' The separate targets for individual pupils which teachers provide for reading, writing and mathematics also help them to know what they must do to improve. However, while pupils have a good opportunity to assess their thematic studies when they are finished, there is little other opportunity for pupils to self-assess individual pieces of work.
- Staff manage the pupils well and there is a natural respect between staff and pupils. Lessons proceed smoothly. The good adult:pupil ratio ensures that the pupils receive good support. Teachers share their time well between the different ages in each class so that all pupils receive appropriate guidance.
- Teaching assistants play an important part in the overall teaching arrangements; for example, by taking groups for phonics (linking letters and sounds) in Key Stage 1. The teachers ensure that the assistants are clear about what they have to do with different groups. However, occasionally, teaching assistants provide too much information and do not question the pupils enough to build up their understanding.
- While teachers have a good understanding of teaching phonics, older pupils are not always taught well enough how to interpret texts in sufficient depth and to understand what the author is saying.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils feel safe in school and have confidence in the staff. They know who to turn to if they have a problem. They enjoy school and the extra activities on offer.
- Attendance is above the national average.
- Pupils typically behave well in class, as they do at the breakfast club. They also behave well when out at play and around the school. There have been no exclusions.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take but indicate that no bullying takes place in school. Pupils forge good relationships with one another. Older pupils care for the younger. A joint school council has been arranged with the federated school but this has yet to get underway.
- Pupils understand how to conduct themselves safely when out of school. They know that there are unsafe internet sites. They appreciate that they must not talk to strangers and not to go out alone at night.
- Some pupils act as junior road safety officers and book people in to advise the pupils how to act safely on the roads. They know about the 'Green Cross Code' and that they need to wear a

helmet when riding their bikes.

- Pupils have been keen to send stationery items to two schools in Ghana. These links have enhanced their cultural understanding and awareness of how others live. Moral and social development is promoted well as they take part in productions which they present at the village institute and when raising money for charity in partnership with the friends of the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher of the federated schools has led the school well since the last inspection. Improved teaching has resulted in pupils' more rapid progress and a more interesting way of organising subjects and learning activities. She enjoys the support of the staff. One wrote, 'The school has moved forward enormously over the last two years and I am extremely proud to be a part of the federation.'
- Teaching is monitored well within the school through a range of strategies including looking at work samples, observations of lessons and discussions with pupils. Opportunities for professional development are arranged well in conjunction with the federated school.
- The way subjects are taught is imaginatively designed with good links made between subjects and supported by a range of extra activities which is good, given the size of the school. Particularly good use is made of writing in different subjects. As part of their study of the Victorians, pupils wrote poetry. One wrote, 'We line up, the dark figures appear,
Puzzled faces rise and the giggles begin...'
- Pupils have good opportunities for creativity. Younger pupils made rockets as part of their space theme. Reception children enjoy a good balance of more formal teaching and activities which they choose for themselves. Visits give pupils lasting memories of their studies. During the inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils dressed as Victorian children and visited a museum of that period.
- The school has a very small number entitled to the pupil premium and so receives little extra finance. This has mainly been spent on extra learning resources and books. The pupils concerned are making good progress and their current levels of attainment compare very favourably with others.
- There are good arrangements to review the performance of all staff. However, the targets agreed are not always written clearly enough so that the teachers know what is expected and how success will be judged. Too much is in the form of jottings without specific outcomes to be aimed for.
- Links with the federated school are developing well. Joint staff meetings and professional development are helping the staff to learn from one another's practice in the two schools. However, the staff do not yet have enough responsibility across the federation, such as subject leadership, to help their professional and career development and there has not been enough exchange of ideas to teach reading successfully.
- The school enjoys good links with other local schools and they arrange training among themselves. The local authority has reduced its staffing very significantly and so it cannot offer the same amount of training as it did. It keeps a monitoring brief on the school, setting priorities and visiting twice yearly to assess progress towards these. It has continued to provide training to meet governors' requests.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body does a good job. It is well led and serves the needs of the two federated schools well. Its good range of expertise is used effectively in the different committees. Governors understand pupil performance data and they maintain a good oversight of finance. Their skills enable them to question and challenge, particularly in relation to individual pupils' progress. The Chair of the Governing Body attends regular update meetings with the local authority so that she is kept well informed. Governors know about the pupil premium and that there are very few pupils entitled to the allowance, but they know how the very limited funding is spent and of these pupils' progress. They understand the way that reviews of teachers' performance are arranged but acknowledge that there is limited funding to provide incentives for staff at this time. Individual governors follow up items on the school development plan and their visits to school to do this give them insight into the improved quality of teaching. As the Chair commented, 'Some of the teaching ideas really make me tingle.'

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121826
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	406052

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 of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Billingsby
Headteacher	Jan Abrams
Date of previous school inspection	17 February 2011
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