

Hamilton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110520
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310345
Inspection dates	11 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Mr Selwyn Ward

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

Type of School	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	657
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Raleigh
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Woolgar
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2004
School address	Priory Avenue High Wycombe HP13 6SG
Telephone number	01494 522231
Fax number	01494 440576
Age group	4 -11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated the impact of measures taken to improve standards, any variation in provision between key stages, and pupils' attendance. Parts of some lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires and a sample of pupils' work were examined and school information, including self-evaluation, was scrutinised. The inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

In this very large school, pupils come from diverse backgrounds. Around a third are White British, a third are from families of Pakistani origin, and other pupils come from a range of backgrounds. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is high. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities. These cover a wide range of difficulties, but the largest numbers are for dyslexia and for speech and language problems. The school operates across two sites which are about half a mile apart.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hamilton Primary is a good school and it is well led and managed. The school sums up its aims as 'Quality, Respect, Opportunity, Support, Improvement' and it has had considerable success in achieving them.

Parents strongly value the good quality of provision, and especially the good teaching that has delivered consistently above average standards in the Year 6 national tests. Parents appreciate that pupils achieve well in other subjects too. The school has a high reputation for the quality of its music provision; with a great many pupils involved in learning an instrument, singing and performing. During the inspection, pupils in Year 4 were busily preparing the opera they are putting together on the theme of safety and the urban environment. Standards have not been as high in the Year 2 assessments, with pupils generally achieving satisfactorily in Key Stage 1 and attaining average standards rather than building more strongly on the good progress made in the Foundation Stage. School leaders have identified this as key area for improvement and have begun to revise the Key Stage 1 curriculum to make it more interesting and engaging for the pupils. Pupils do not make as rapid a progress as they could in Years 1 and 2 because teachers do not always engage and actively involve them in lessons as effectively as in other year groups.

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils greatly enjoy school and they are often enthusiastic in lessons, particularly in Key Stage 2. Relationships throughout the school are excellent and pupils treat each other with respect. They celebrate the broad range of cultures represented in the school, and, as a result, the school works as a racially harmonious community. Pupils take a real pride in their school and the many responsibilities they take on within the school community, for example, as office monitors, manning the telephones at lunchtime, and as peer mediators, helping to resolve minor squabbles. Behaviour throughout the school is good and pupils confirm that they feel safe at school and have a very good understanding of how to keep safe.

A notable strength of Hamilton Primary is the opportunity offered to pupils by the exceptional range of extra-curricular activities. Parents voice particular appreciation for, as one commented, '...the amazing effort made to enrich children's learning'. The many music ensembles reflect the high profile given to this subject, but pupils also enjoy taking part in a wide range of sports, which, with their very good understanding of the need for a healthy diet, help to keep pupils active and healthy. Among the extensive range of clubs is the school's chess club, which has earned the school an impressive record, with pupils from Hamilton making up around half of the county chess teams for both nine and eleven-year-olds. Governors point out that the size of the school gives it greater opportunity than most primary schools to band pupils by ability and to offer specialist teaching in several subjects. The curriculum overall is good rather than better, however, because changes to move to more topic-based teaching in Key Stage 1 are too recent to have shown through significantly in terms of their impact on standards.

The support for pupils is good. Teaching assistants help those with dyslexia, language learning difficulties and the many pupils learning English as an additional language to make good progress. Welfare arrangements are robust. The school has built a very effective partnership with parents who, in turn, are very supportive both of the school and of their children's education. Several come in to school to help in class and many say how much they appreciate the help they have been given through mathematics evenings to bring them up to speed on the way the subject is taught so that they can help their children at home. Attendance rates are only average because some parents take family holidays in term time, despite the school's strong efforts to discourage this avoidable absence. Pupils benefit from good academic guidance through the targets they have, particularly with the introduction this year of 'Writing Passports' that help pupils to improve their work by setting out the next steps in their learning. Teachers' marking, however, does not always give pupils a clear enough steer on what they need to do to improve their work.

Although Hamilton Primary is successful, there is no sense of complacency from the headteacher, governors and leadership team. Based on careful monitoring of provision and analysis of pupils' progress, they have a very accurate picture both of the school's many strengths and of those aspects that could be better. Staff in this well run school strive for continued improvement, with some recent changes already having had a positive effect. The school's consistent track record of success show its good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents reserve particular praise for the very good start their children get off to in the Foundation Stage. Several rightly comment on how their children are helped to quickly settle in 'as a result of the care given by teachers and other staff'. From a starting point that is broadly in line with the skills expected nationally of four-year-olds, children make good progress to reach above average standards by the end of the Reception Year in all areas of learning. They do especially well in their social development. As a parent explained, 'The school gently instils discipline without compromising creativity'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils are given activities that keep them interested and fully engaged, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Give pupils clear feedback through marking that guides them on what they need to do to improve their work.

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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 effectiveness in the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	2

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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

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 interest of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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