

Horsted Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118442
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	379619
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Melanie Knowles HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Lambkin
Headteacher	Steve Geary
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2009
School address	Barberry Avenue Chatham Kent ME5 9TF
Telephone number	01634 863395
Fax number	01634 863395
Email address	office@horsted-inf.medway.sch.uk

Age group 3–7

Inspection date(s) 1–2 February 2012

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Introduction

Inspection team

Melanie Knowles

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Hare

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons taught by seven teachers. Three of these were joint observations with the deputy headteacher. In addition, the team made visits to two group phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) sessions led by teachers and one early-literacy support group lesson led by a teaching assistant. Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 1 and 2 reading. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils from Year 2, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at relevant documentation including data on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance, the school development plan, key policies and evidence of the school's monitoring. Inspectors also looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks and teachers' lesson plans. They analysed 77 paper questionnaires from parents and carers and others completed by staff.

Information about the school

Horsted Infant School is smaller than average. The school is federated with Horsted Junior School and the schools share the same site. An executive headteacher leads both schools and there is a single governing body. Both schools were inspected at the same time by two separate inspection teams. The headteacher joined the school in September 2011. The deputy headteacher also took up her post in September. A large majority of pupils at the school are White British, though there is an increasing number from a variety of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is below average. The percentage of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication needs or autistic spectrum disorder. The school has gained a number of awards including the Primary Quality Mark for basic skills and the Eco-Schools Green Flag.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils enjoy learning, feel safe and are well cared for by the staff. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. One parent, reflecting the views of many, wrote, 'There is a welcoming, happy vibe at the school where all children are equal and confident in their environment.'
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the time they reach the end of Year 2 the attainment of most pupils is above average.
- The quality of teaching in the school is generally good. Teachers make good use of a range of strategies, including questioning, role play, paired work and discussion to ensure that all pupils are engaged in their learning.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and attendance has improved to above-average levels in the last year. Pupils have respect for each other and the school is a harmonious community. However, there are relatively few pupils from different ethnic and religious groups represented in the school and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to explore and develop their understanding of cultural diversity.
- Recent changes to the leadership of the school have been managed well and the new headteacher has already built very good relationships with pupils, staff and parents and carers. He has a clear, ambitious vision and his fresh approach has reinvigorated the staff so that the school is in a good position to make further improvements.
- The headteacher has made some significant changes to the senior and middle leadership team in the school and raised expectations about the accountability of subject leaders, who do not presently have a sufficient impact on pupils' outcomes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the skills of middle leaders so that they can have a demonstrable and direct impact on pupils' learning and progress.

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- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity by ensuring that the curriculum provides opportunities for them to learn about different cultures in the locality and further afield.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers say they are happy with the progress that their children make at Horsted Infants and the inspection team agrees that pupils' achievement is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work with enthusiasm in lessons. They cooperate well with each other and share resources effectively.

Assessments indicate that most children are at age-appropriate levels in all areas of learning when they join the school in Reception. Children make good progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most join Year 1 with levels of attainment above the expected levels. The indoor learning environment in both Reception classes is bright and stimulating and both classrooms are very well resourced. Teachers foster children's independence so that they are able to change for physical education sessions unaided and make their own healthy snacks. The activities on offer excite and motivate the children and develop their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills effectively.

Good rates of progress are sustained across Years 1 and 2, especially in reading and mathematics. For the last three years attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in mathematics and reading has been well-above average. Pupils enjoy reading and benefit from a well-stocked library and well-planned opportunities to read fiction and non-fiction books in lessons. For example, in a Year 1 reading session a group of pupils were researching information about dinosaurs from a variety of books as part of a topic on dinosaurs and dragons. Attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 has been variable and was only broadly average in 2011. This is an area that the school is working to improve. It is purchasing new materials to support the teaching of sounds and letters and is providing further training in the teaching of writing for staff. School data indicate that more pupils are on track to reach higher levels in writing this year.

Rigorous moderation exercises between classes and with other schools in the locality ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. The improved tracking system allows school leaders and teachers to monitor every pupil's progress. They quickly identify any pupils who may be falling behind and ensure that gaps in knowledge are addressed. Well-targeted support programmes, as well as individual support from teaching assistants in lessons, enable pupils to catch up. Data show that there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress overall.

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Quality of teaching

The practice seen during the inspection confirms the school's view that the quality of teaching is generally good and this explains the pupils' good progress over time. The overwhelmingly positive responses from parents and carers to the inspection questionnaires show that they agree that their children are taught well. Teachers plan well-structured lessons that have a good balance of whole-class, teacher-directed work and independent activities for pupils. However, teachers do not always plan activities in lessons that are pitched at the right level for pupils of different abilities. In some lessons higher-attaining pupils complete their work very quickly and other pupils cannot manage without adult support. The pace of lessons is generally brisk and little time is lost in the transition between activities. Teachers promote pupils' moral and social development by having high expectations with regard to behaviour, cooperation and teamwork, and support pupils to develop a caring ethos and an attitude of perseverance. Teachers use good strategies to engage the pupils. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the pupils were all thoroughly engrossed when the teacher took the role of the big bad wolf and invited the pupils to ask her questions. In Year 1 the teacher used large photographs of different landscapes to encourage discussion about what the world looked like in prehistoric times.

The school has a large number of teaching assistants, many of whom are very experienced. They are able to lead small-group support sessions and provide very effective one-to-one support in class for those learners who have particular needs. In lessons they are generally deployed to support groups of pupils with the completion of their work. They are often underused when the teacher is directing the learning of the whole class. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. In Reception and Year 1 they write simple comments that inform pupils what they have done well. In Year 2 they use a clear system of pink and green highlighters which help the pupils understand what could be improved.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The ethos of the school is caring and seeks to foster a culture of respect for others. All parents and carers say that their children feel safe at school and the pupils confirmed this when they met with inspectors. Pupils say that bullying in any form is at a low level. They know what to do if they are concerned and say that any incidents are dealt with quickly by staff. Older pupils are able to assess risky situations and understand how to take actions to minimise risk, for example when using the computer. Attendance has improved in the last year and is now above average and punctuality is generally good.

Adults provide very positive role models for pupils and insist on good manners and courtesy at all times. Staff ensure that pupils move safely and calmly around the school and hold on to handrails when using the stairs. Behaviour on the playground is lively, but pupils still show care and consideration for each other and are typically courteous and respectful to staff. A good range of play equipment is available to

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pupils who wish to be active and there is a quieter area with seating for those who would rather sit and chat. Scrutiny of records confirms that behaviour in lessons is good over time. Staff say that behaviour in the school is consistently well managed and inspectors agree. A few parents and carers feel their children's lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour, but the pupils say that any disruption is very minor and dealt with very quickly. The behaviour seen in lessons and around the school during the inspection was consistently good. Behaviour in the two Reception classes was exemplary.

Leadership and management

One member of staff described the new headteacher as 'a breath of fresh air'. He is certainly a strong driving force for further improvement in the school. Some key staff do not yet have the skills or experience to enable them to make a full contribution to school improvement. However, the headteacher is building the confidence and expertise of the deputy headteacher and curriculum leaders through a structured programme of training and support. The headteacher has analysed school data and visited every class to observe teaching and learning. He has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has used this accurate self-evaluation to create a well-focused school development plan. Staff at the school have complete confidence in the new headteacher's leadership and morale in the school is good. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

Governors are beginning to develop their role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school through visits to classes and they receive detailed reports from the headteacher about progress with the school's planned priorities. School leaders and the governing body ensure that arrangements to keep pupils safe are good and that all staff are trained in child protection procedures. They have a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all and carefully track the progress of groups that may be vulnerable to underachievement, such as pupils eligible for free school meals or those who are disabled or have special educational needs.

Relationships with parents and carers are highly positive. Parents and carers receive regular newsletters and reports on their children's progress and they are able to call in to see teachers informally if they wish. Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said that the school keeps them well informed and helps them to support their children's learning.

The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 is good and makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. It is well-organised and imaginative and provides exciting opportunities for pupils to learn about things that interest them. Pupils in Year 1 are enthusiastic about their current topic 'dinosaurs and dragons' and children in Reception have fun learning about sounds and going on 'sound walks' around the school. Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by specialist music teaching and a range of sports clubs. However, pupils' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity is underdeveloped. The school has a very active 'eco-team' and pupils across the school have a good understanding

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of the importance of saving energy and composting waste. They can reflect on and discuss these important issues. For example, Year 1 pupils have been deciding which waste materials can safely go in the school's wormery. The curriculum in Year 2 is still taught in discrete subjects but the school has plans to develop the curriculum for Year 2 pupils in line with a new creative approach which is to be adopted in the junior school.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Horsted Infant School, Chatham ME5 9TF

We really enjoyed spending two days in your school and talking to you about your learning and life at Horsted Infant School. You made us feel very welcome by the friendly way in which you talked to us and showed us what you were learning in lessons. We enjoyed seeing you improving your jumping and throwing skills in Reception, learning about dinosaurs and dragons in Year 1 and making 'Wanted' posters for the Big Bad Wolf in Year 2.

Your school provides you with a good education. These are the things we found to be best about it.

- You make good progress in your learning because you are taught well.
- You work hard in lessons and come to school when you are supposed to.
- The way you behave is good and you get on very well with each other.
- The staff at the school care for you well, and this helps you to feel safe.

To help your school to become even better we have asked the school to do two main things. We have asked the teachers to help you find out about the different people who live in your area and further afield, including in other countries, so that you can learn more about different cultures, traditions and religions. We have also asked your headteacher to help teachers with leadership responsibilities become even better at helping the school to improve further.

I know you will continue to work hard and do your best. Thank you for a very enjoyable and memorable visit and best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Knowles
Her Majesty's Inspector

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