

Halstead Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118274
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358295
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Reporting inspector	June Woolhouse

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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Grice
Headteacher	Robert Straker
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2008
School address	Oxford Lane Sevenoaks TN14 7EA
Telephone number	01959 532224
Fax number	01959 532224
Email address	headteacher@halstead.kent.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Inspection number	358295

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight lessons and all four teachers were observed twice. Inspectors held meetings with school leaders, governors, the local authority adviser and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, the school development plan, and pupils' work. Parents and carers returned 30 questionnaires and inspectors analysed these as well as those returned by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and progress of pupils in order to determine the effectiveness of teachers' planning for the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes
- how well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn and make progress
- how effective leaders and managers are in managing the assessment of pupils' learning, tracking pupils' progress and setting appropriate targets in Key Stage 2
- how effective leaders and managers are in managing the assessment of pupils' learning, tracking pupils' progress and setting appropriate targets in Key Stage 2

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average primary school takes pupils from the local village and further afield. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average; their needs include speech, language and communication, and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. A below-average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has the Activemark award. A private nursery operates on the site in one of the school's classrooms and is inspected separately. There have been some changes to staff in the past two years. The school was led by a local authority headteacher in the summer term 2010, following the resignation of the previous headteacher. An executive headteacher is now in post for the academic year 2010 to 2011 and the school is part of a federation with the Anthony Roper Primary School in Eynsford.

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: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' attainment, learning and progress, safeguarding procedures, the quality of teaching and governance.

Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class with a range of nursery experiences. They have skills at levels expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve well, reaching levels above national expectations by the end of the Reception year. However, pupils make inadequate progress throughout the school and consequently, attain significantly below national expectations by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This has been the case in two of the last three years, in reading, writing and mathematics. Boys in Key Stage 2 attain significantly lower than girls. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The support and challenge received from the local authority has led to recent improvements in attainment, as shown by the 2010 national tests and teacher assessments. The appointment of a new headteacher is having a positive impact on staff morale and a clear agenda for what needs to be done to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment has been established.

The quality of teaching across the school varies from inadequate to good but too much remains inadequate overall. Teachers' use of assessment information to plan lessons is inconsistent because it does not take enough account of the different ages and abilities of the pupils in each class. Too much whole-class teaching slows down learning for the more able and older pupils, leading to low-level disruption. Presentation of work, spelling and handwriting are not good enough. Behaviour is satisfactory overall but deteriorates when teaching is inadequate. Most pupils feel safe in school, but a few are anxious about the poor behaviour of a few individuals. The headteacher has intervened and improved this situation since the start of term. Most pupils enjoy each other's company, respect each other and take care of younger pupils and siblings on the playground. Attendance is now above average and much improved since the last inspection because of the school's efforts to explain to parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

The school's performance has been adversely affected by frequent changes in personnel and the lack of experienced staff to support new colleagues. More recently, the governing body has started to challenge the school about pupils' performance overall, although their knowledge of the performance of specific groups of pupils is limited. They have not acted swiftly enough to guarantee that all safeguarding requirements are in place.

The appointment of the executive headteacher has already had a noticeable impact. For example, he has set out a comprehensive professional development plan to increase

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

teachers' subject knowledge in English and mathematics, linked staff from his school to support individual teachers, appointed a new coordinator for special educational needs, organised work to secure the school site to start immediately and required all pupils to adopt acceptable standards of behaviour in school. Good relationships with governors are now in place and the school has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. As yet, although pupils have been set targets, there is no school-wide system to track their progress towards meeting these. This hampers teachers' ability to plan and teach lessons matched to pupils' needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all safeguarding requirements are in place by the end of October 2010, including appropriate training for all staff.
- Raise attainment and increase pupils' progress, particularly for more-able pupils and boys, by:
 - using assessment information effectively to plan lessons that meet the needs of all the pupils
 - increasing teachers' subject knowledge in English, mathematics and science
 - training staff in a range of teaching styles to improve the pace of learning
 - ensuring that pupils' performance targets are challenging but realistic
 - improving presentation, spelling and handwriting skills
 - developing a consistent approach to managing behaviour.
- Improve the knowledge and skills of the governing body so governors know that all statutory requirements are fully in place and they are regularly monitored.
- Improve assessment practice by:
 - establishing a monitoring and evaluation programme to check that teachers are consistently using performance information when lessons are being planned
 - implementing a whole-school system to track pupils' progress that is used consistently by teachers when lessons are being planned so that the needs of all pupils are met.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

National test data at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009 show a decline in attainment which is significantly below the national average and lower than that attained in 2008. This reflects inadequate achievement from above average starting points when pupils enter into Year 1. Pupils' progress in many lessons is inadequate because of teachers' lack of subject knowledge, ineffective lesson planning and limited classroom management skills. Pupils are keen to learn. However, they mark time with few strategies to self correct, for example in first drafts of writing, because they do not know precisely what they are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. Younger pupils often make good progress in lessons because they have tasks better suited to their needs and practical materials to help them learn. For example, in a numeracy lesson coins, cards and a shop were

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

available to support learning. Year groups were split within the classroom and this supported pupils' personal, social and emotional development more effectively.

In spite of inadequate teaching, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and enjoy playing games very much. The school has achieved the Activemark for the past three years. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy life style. They regularly drink water and eat fruit. School dinners are healthy and have a large take up. Pupils' contributions to the school and local community are satisfactory. These include fundraising events, school fairs and performing plays. The school council provides opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to develop their social, moral and cultural understanding. Pupils have time to reflect in their daily assemblies and demonstrate their sensitivity to younger pupils and enthusiasm for their eco club.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Although teachers have started to use national assessment materials to monitor pupils' progress, their judgements are not accurate enough to plan lessons that meet the needs of the wide ability range in mixed-age classes, particularly those in Key Stage 2. Teachers have limited knowledge of the expected rates of progress or standards which pupils are expected to reach. Inspection evidence strongly suggests that the impact of inadequate

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

teaching and planning and frequent changes in teaching staff has, over time, contributed strongly to the downward trend in attainment.

During lessons, pupils are encouraged to think about their learning, but teachers' questioning is often confusing. Pupils are rarely shown how to apply their understanding by observing their teachers' well-chosen examples of how to solve problems. Too much teacher talk slows the pace of learning and some pupils mark time by talking to their classmates until all pupils know the next task to complete. Teaching assistants are not always deployed to best effect and this limits their impact on pupils' learning. However, those pupils receiving individual support for special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make better progress because their needs are well understood and tasks are well matched to their abilities.

The curriculum is adequately planned to meet the needs of the pupils through the opportunity to learn through themes and topics. It is broad ranging and organised so that it captures pupils' interests through projects such as 'The Romans' or 'Important People'. Pupils talk enthusiastically about trips they make and visitors who came to school last term, which bring their topics to life. Provision for information and communication technology is good and there are planned cross-curricular links between literacy and other subjects. Pupils are enthusiastic about after-school clubs, participating energetically in well-organised games.

Levels of care, guidance and support are satisfactory although the school has been managing without a special educational needs coordinator for a term. This role has been strengthened through the appointment of a specialist teacher and there is good support from the partner school. Pupils receive appropriate advice about transfer to their secondary schools. Support for potentially vulnerable children is good and these pupils are fully integrated into school life. Relationships between adults and pupils are supportive although not all pupils know who to speak to if they have a problem. A programme to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional well-being is progressing well in establishing a stronger awareness of for example, expected pupil behaviour.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Adults in a variety of roles are starting to work together under the expert direction and support of the new executive headteacher. His commitment and determination to make this a good school are noteworthy. The headteacher is continuing the momentum for improvement established in the previous term with local authority assistance. Within a very short space of time he has acted decisively to establish a calm school environment in

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

which pupils can now work without disruption. He has also prioritised the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning through comprehensive professional development for staff and the effective deployment of teachers from his own school. This is beginning to show positive results as expectations of pupils' capabilities have been raised and targets are more challenging. At present, the management of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory because systems to monitor systematically the quality of learning, teaching and planning are not yet in place. The school's promotion of equal opportunities is inadequate because of the significant variation in the performance of different groups.

The governing body has worked hard to identify the school's weaknesses but in the past has focused on the pupils' performance. This is quickly improving so that governors now contribute more directly to school development plan priorities and school self-evaluation judgements. The governing body is not meeting its duties with regard to safeguarding procedures.

Relationships with parents and carers have remained good and some parents have commented on the positive change in ethos this term. Partnerships within the local cluster of schools, especially the executive headteacher's school, and the local authority, are already providing satisfactory support. This includes support for potentially vulnerable pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Community cohesion is satisfactory within the school and local community. There are developing global links to countries in Africa and France. At present, pupils are less certain about what happens in different communities in this country and how they, as future citizens, can contribute to a multi-cultural society. The governing body has not evaluated how its plan is working in this wider context or looked at curriculum plans to see how pupils will increase their understanding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress and achieve well. They settle quickly into school routines because adults understand their needs well and provide stimulating and interesting activities both indoors and outside. The setting is arranged to cover all the necessary learning activities, enhanced by good quality resources and equipment. Children enjoy playing together and show respect and consideration as they share resources, for example investigating what they can do in the sand or water tray. Their behaviour is excellent. They understand about aspects of staying healthy, including drinking water, eating fruit and taking vigorous exercise outside. They like to climb and ride bikes. They show good levels of communication and confidently hold conversations with adults in a sustained way.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage, together with her assistant, plans a rich curriculum around a theme, for example 'All About Me' or 'Harvest'. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those chosen by the child. Children listen attentively and are confident in answering questions, for example in a numeracy session on plane and solid shapes they could name a rectangle and explain why it was different from a square. Adults collect detailed and regular assessments through direct observation and examples of children's achievements for their individual records. These accurately represent children's progress. Children's welfare and happiness are paramount and adults foster warm, supportive relationships. Partnerships with parents and carers are strong so that they know they are equally involved in their children's education. Partnerships with other agencies, for example the local authority and the private on-site nursery class, contribute well to children's well-being and transition into school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

About a third of parents and carers returned questionnaires. The vast majority fully support the school and are very pleased about the appointment of a new headteacher. A few believed their concerns were not sufficiently addressed or that the school was not well led and managed, but this referred to last term in some cases. Inspectors found that every attempt to engage parents and carers in the education of their children is taken. A small minority of parents was concerned that unacceptable behaviour was not well managed. During inspection behaviour was satisfactory and disruptive behaviour was dealt with appropriately. Plans are evolving towards establishing a whole-school, behaviour management policy so that any further disruption will be managed consistently by all adults.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Halstead Community primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 86 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	60	11	37	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	40	16	53	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	57	13	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	40	15	50	3	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	47	14	47	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	47	14	47	2	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	50	12	40	3	10	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	50	12	40	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	40	17	57	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	33	11	37	7	23	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	40	11	37	4	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	43	13	43	3	10	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	53	13	43	1	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



30 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Halstead Community Primary School, Halstead TN14 7EA

Thank you very much for your help during the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you in your lessons. We were pleased to see how well you got on together at playtime and when you are involved in team games. We were impressed by the way you looked after younger children who might find the playground large and busy. We also noticed that you know how to keep healthy by eating fruit, drinking water and enjoying delicious school lunches. We certainly did. You told us you enjoyed coming to school especially to take part in sports and games.

However, there are some things that your teachers must do better so that you will make more progress and reach the standards that are necessary before you move to secondary school. Your new headteacher has already started to make a list of the things he knows must improve so it is very important that you all help him and your teachers to put them into practice. The school has been given a 'notice to improve' which means there will be another inspector who comes back to school in about six to eight months time to check on the progress which you are making. The governors, headteacher and staff have been asked to improve the following:

- raise the standards which you reach in English, mathematics and science
- establish a tracking system so that teachers know how well you are doing and what is required next to help you improve
- improve the way the governors work to support the school and to make sure they know how well it is performing
- make sure that teaching in all lessons is at least good .
- make sure that all procedures regarding your safety and welfare are in place and effective.

We do hope you continue to enjoy school and that soon you will all be making better progress in your learning.

Yours sincerely

June Woolhouse

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.