

High Halden Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118666
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358416
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2010
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Ball
Headteacher	Lindsay Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited eight lessons taught by four different members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the governing body, another governor, the school improvement partner and with staff and pupils. They looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's self-evaluation documents, including records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 56 parents and carers were also considered.

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

- How far advanced children are when they enter the Reception class and the extent of the progress they make during the Reception year.
- The progress pupils make in Years 3 to 6 and whether it is sufficient.
- How consistent and effective teaching is, and how well staff use assessment to plan work with sufficient challenge for pupils.
- The extent to which the curriculum has been revised and how embedded the changes are.
- The effectiveness of the leadership of senior leaders and governors and the extent to which governors have met their obligations in relation to community cohesion.

Information about the school

High Halden is much smaller than most primary schools. It shares its site with a private pre-school. That provision is inspected separately. The school's population is very stable and predominantly White British. Around one eighth of pupils are from Gypsy/Roma backgrounds, together with a small number who are of Irish Traveller heritage; these groups have a much larger representation in High Halden than in most schools. All children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The majority of these have moderate learning difficulties or speech and language difficulties. Few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school offers a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body. The headteacher had been in post for five weeks prior to the inspection.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

High Halden Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory education. However, attainment is beginning to rise and pupils' progress, though still inconsistent, is improving. Stable staffing, committed teachers and governors and more rigorous assessment systems are enabling staff to tackle the legacy of past underperformance, although this is not yet fully evident in pupils' attainment.

Parents and carers recognise the school's commitment to pupils' well-being and to their good personal development and this partnership is good. As a result, pupils attend regularly, enjoy school, and feel very safe, and most have positive attitudes to learning. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and diet and undertake frequent exercise. Pupils' contribution to the school is good, although links with the local community are less secure. Pupils behave well and exclusions are rare. A key strength is the school's work with Gypsy/Roma and Traveller heritage pupils. These pupils mostly attend well, largely because of the close bond of trust between the school and the Gypsy/Roma community. Regular attendance contributes strongly to the good progress these pupils make, with some reaching the expected level when they leave in Year 6 despite entering the school with low starting points.

Although children generally have a good start in Reception, the school has not built fully upon this. Standards have picked up in Year 2 recently and are now above average. This improving picture is not so evident in Years 3 to 6, although progress in mathematics has accelerated and attainment is now above average in this subject. Attainment in writing, where progress is no more than satisfactory, is recognised as a key area for improvement. Recent initiatives to raise outcomes in writing have not yet had a significant impact, as pupils do not have enough varied opportunities to practise their skills. Progress in reading is slightly greater than in writing. Teachers are now more skilled in evaluating how well pupils are progressing. Teachers' marking is more rigorous. However, teachers do not analyse performance data in sufficient depth to identify where and when pupils make the best progress. Pupils' personalised targets are now used well to promote progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress. Some do better than this because they receive high quality support, with work carefully adapted to their needs.

The recently revised curriculum, although not yet fully embedded, has a key focus on literacy and numeracy, seeking in particular to develop these skills through other subjects. Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are very well developed, while specialist external support contributes to good opportunities in performing arts and physical education. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment opportunities are good.

The governing body has been in a period of transition. While it has a good understanding of its role, it has not always been sufficiently rigorous in discharging its key duties in

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relation to safeguarding and to health and safety. Though satisfactory overall, not enough attention has been given to embedding community cohesion. Accurate self-evaluation, appropriate development planning, improved teaching and progress, satisfactory governance and the decisive actions of the new headteacher ensure that the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon current initiatives to increase the rate at which pupils develop their writing skills, ensuring that they have more frequent opportunities to write at length, for different purposes and across a range of subjects.
- Develop staff skills in analysing and interpreting data relating to pupils' attainment and progress, so that pupils make more consistent and rapid progress in their core skills of writing, reading and mathematics.
- Improve community cohesion by:
 - developing meaningful links with schools and communities within the United Kingdom
 - extending pupils' knowledge of cultures, religions and beliefs other than their own.
- Ensure that the governing body is rigorous in its oversight of the safeguarding of pupils and the implementation of procedures in relation to health and safety.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Attainment has risen in Years 1 and 2 and is above average. However, despite significant improvement in mathematics, progress in English, particularly in writing, remains inconsistent in Years 3 to 6. Improved attainment in mathematics reflects, in part at least, the impact of the specialist teaching provided for able pupils. The headteacher recognises that standards in writing are not high enough and has acted to increase the focus on writing.

In many lessons, learning is good. Relationships are good. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their work. In one outstanding literacy and ICT lesson, work was carefully planned to match the needs of each group, including the most able. Pupils had to generate descriptions of the Grand Canyon, in response to panoramic images from the Internet. Individually and in pairs, they generated and presented striking verbal images, using a range of well-established ICT skills. The brisk pace enabled pupils, including those from Gypsy/Roma backgrounds, to make rapid progress in both language and ICT skills. Questioning was sharply adjusted to each pupil's understanding. However, a science lesson on rock types, while generating some challenging discussion, did not always focus sufficiently on the learning needs of older pupils. Generous time spent on planning and preparation constrained opportunities for pupils to 'do science'. Across the school, however, the new focus on evaluating one's own work and that of others is helping to increase pupils' awareness of how well they are doing and this, together with more effective marking of written work, is contributing to better learning.

Pupils treat each other, and adults, with courtesy. The school council organises fund-raising activities and gives pupils some access to the democratic process, including a visit

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to a magistrate's court. Older pupils take responsibility for those who are younger and willingly undertake many community tasks. Although multicultural awareness is not systematically developed, spiritual, social and moral development is good. Adequately developed basic skills ensure that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for future study and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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 progress over time, particularly in writing, is uneven, much of the teaching seen was good. Planning is thorough, offering challenging activities which are often well matched to pupils' needs. Occasionally, not enough account is taken of the different year groups within mixed-year classes. Teachers encourage pupils to develop independence as learners. Pupils use laptop computers effectively to support research and extend their learning. There is not enough focus on the analysis and evaluation of pupils' progress data, although teachers' evaluation of pupils' understanding and progress has improved. They question pupils closely to ensure that they have understood key ideas. Pupils make good use of self-evaluation strategies, both oral and written. Teachers' marking now provides clearer guidance as to next steps, while individual targets help take learning forward. Though much is relatively new, these strategies are contributing to pupils' improved progress.

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The recently reviewed curriculum satisfactorily supports the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Science, though underemphasised in the last school year, now has a higher profile. Pupils' ICT skills are well developed and ICT has a positive impact on learning in other subjects. Pupils' learning benefits significantly from external support in the performing arts and in physical education. Their personal, social, health and citizenship education is satisfactorily promoted.

In many respects, staff care for pupils well and are responsive to their needs. However, some aspects of safeguarding have, until very recently, been relatively weak and are still no better than satisfactory. Transition arrangements are good. Links with the Gypsy/Roma community are well developed and mutually beneficial. The school works closely with all support agencies, particularly for pupils with specific needs. There is good practice in supporting the health, social, behavioural and transition needs of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The breakfast club, although few pupils attend at present, provides well for the needs of working parents. The skills of learning support staff are used well to promote pupils' learning and well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

In a short time, the headteacher has accurately identified key areas of underperformance and has already successfully tackled several issues, including aspects of safeguarding and health and safety. Staff are well motivated and committed and morale is high. The school has successfully sustained its good partnership with parents and carers. External partnerships, while satisfactory, are developing, with emerging shared activities with neighbouring schools. These actions are beginning to have an impact on pupils' learning. The leadership and management of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The headteacher already recognises the strengths of the teaching and where further support is needed.

Several recently appointed governors have brought relevant specialist skills in, for example, in finance and in public sector health and safety. Established governors are well informed about standards, accurately evaluate the school's data and provide good support and increasingly effective challenge. Governors have a clear view of where the priorities lie, recognising that not all procedures, particularly in relation to pupils' safety and well-being, have been monitored with sufficient rigour. The procedures for safeguarding pupils are now satisfactory, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined. Weaknesses in relation to fire safety and risk assessments have been dealt with. Discrimination is tackled rigorously and the school has ensured that no group of pupils performs less well than others. It is a very cohesive community, particularly in relation to the Gypsy/Roma

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community. Links with the local community are satisfactory, with scope for development. There are some opportunities to learn about other faiths and communities through emerging international links. However, provision is limited in relation to more diverse communities within the United Kingdom.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children enter Reception from the adjacent private pre-school. Their skills and knowledge on entry vary from year to year. Entry levels for the current Reception group are consistent with their age group, with a significant number functioning at higher levels. However, in the previous two years, entry levels were lower. Well-developed induction arrangements ensure that children feel very safe. They are well cared for and establish good relationships with adults and other children. Children play together confidently and safely and behave well. This contributes strongly to their social development. Children generally make good progress in their learning, leading to attainment which is often above average by the end of Reception, although relatively few children attain at the highest levels. In 2010, progress in aspects of number was less rapid than in other areas and outcomes were below those expected. In response, staff adjusted the programme of work this year to address this issue successfully. Children's skills in reading and writing are effectively supported by a systematic programme of phonic work. Most children are articulate and present their ideas thoughtfully. They have good opportunities to make choices both indoors and out. However, although the outdoor area is used well, resources do not always mirror what is available inside. The school recognises the need to upgrade and replace some current resources. All areas of learning are planned for in the detailed weekly planning. Regular assessments provide plentiful information on children's progress. However, more rigorous analysis of data would enable staff to have a more timely and accurate view of the progress children are making.

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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

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are pleased with the school and what it offers their children. As one said, 'The school is very friendly and caring, with a lovely, homely feeling.' Parents and carers clearly appreciate the breadth of opportunities which the school offers and the care and support their children receive. A very small number of parents and carers had individual concerns, relating either to the progress their children are making or to the support for pupils with special educational needs. The inspection team found that provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory. The school itself recognises, and the inspection team agrees, that the rate at which pupils progress could be faster, particularly in writing.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at High Halden Church of England 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 91 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	63	17	30	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	41	73	15	27	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	52	21	38	3	5	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	55	20	36	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	59	19	34	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	50	23	41	4	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	55	25	45	0	0	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)	27	48	21	38	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	54	22	39	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	34	29	52	5	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	46	24	43	5	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	55	21	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	66	17	30	2	4	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.



18 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of High Halden C of E Primary School, Ashford TN26 3JB

Thank you for making us welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school, and hearing your views on the school. We found that while yours is, at present, a satisfactory school, it has several strengths as a community. These are our main findings.

- You work hard and behave well.
- You are making better progress and attainment is above average by the end of Year 2. Attainment is not so high by the end of Year 6. However, even though it is below average in English, particularly writing, it is much higher in mathematics.
- You undertake lots of jobs in school. However, while you make a good contribution to the school, there are fewer links with the wider community.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and there are some good lessons. You mostly feel that lessons are enjoyable.
- You attend school regularly, feel very safe and have a good awareness of the importance of eating healthily and staying fit.
- The curriculum is satisfactory, and numeracy and ICT are taught well; those of you from a Gypsy/Roma background get good support.
- School leaders ensure that you are well looked after.

We are asking the school to make these changes so that you can do even better.

- Provide you with opportunities to develop your writing skills across the subjects.
- Develop teachers' skills in analysing information about the progress you make, so that they are clear about what you need to do next.
- Establish meaningful links with other communities and faith groups within the United Kingdom.
- Ensure that the governing body keeps a close eye on the school's arrangements for keeping pupils and adults safe.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan

Lead inspector

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