

Hernhill Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118647
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358408
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Gavin Jones

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	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Figgis
Headteacher	Brenda Windsor
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team visited 14 lessons, observing all teachers. The team held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at various documentation including development plans, the school's self-evaluation, and its files on the monitoring of teaching and learning, together with notes on visits made by the local authority. They looked at safeguarding documentation and at 99 questionnaire returns from parents and carers. They also received 19 questionnaire responses from members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Why attainment and progress are not better by the end of Year 6, given the positive picture of attainment and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Why progress is not better in parts of the school when it evaluates 70% of teaching to be good or better.
- Evidence of the outcomes of pupils' personal development, given that the school has graded most of them as good.
- The extent to which pupils understand ethnic, religious and cultural diversity in the society of the United Kingdom of today, and on a more global scale.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average, with some pupils having complex physical and academic needs. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is low and very few speak English as an additional language. A lower proportion of pupils than average are known to be eligible for free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one class. The school holds a number of awards, including Activemark and Investor in People.

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

Hernhill Church of England Primary is a satisfactory school. A strength of the school is the Early Years Foundation Stage, in which children make good progress, with a minority of children leaving for Key Stage 1 with higher than average attainment. The school provides a good level of care for its pupils. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are satisfactory and there are warm relationships between adults and children. Potentially vulnerable pupils, in particular, are very well supported. This is recognised by most parents and carers. As a result of such care, pupils feel safe, behave well and are proud of their school.

Pupils' academic achievement is satisfactory. Although they get off to a good start in Reception and continue to make good progress to Year 2, they make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2. At that point, attainment in English is average. Attainment in mathematics has fallen in the recent past and although it is now broadly average, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 is well below that seen nationally. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls has a negative effect on overall attainment. The school is aware of this and has 'raising attainment plans' to support better progress. Tracking, lesson observations and the scrutiny of books suggests that attainment may be marginally higher in the current Year 6.

Although the curriculum is effective and pupils show good attitudes to their work, teaching is not strong enough to drive progress more quickly in order to secure higher attainment. This is partly because teachers do not plan enough tasks for more-able pupils and, equally, because they do not check progress regularly enough during lessons. Teachers make sound use of data in order to place pupils in groups of similar ability, but marking and target setting are not consistent. Although the school has a system of celebrating success called 'two stars and a wish', the 'wish' element, which is that of the next steps in learning, is sometimes not specific enough.

Most Year 6 pupils take on responsibilities in school and are pleased to contribute. They also contribute to the local community through a range of activities. The school works in partnership with local schools and organisations to support pupils' welfare and learning, although its partnerships do not support pupils enough for them to make good progress in their learning. The school's strategies for promoting community cohesion work well at school and at a local level but are not completely developed for more extended community links. The school has made progress on a range of issues, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, the further development of the curriculum, improvements in reading, and other advances which are more recent and are not yet reflected in improved attainment. The governing body give good support to the school and, together with the positive changes that have already taken place, the school has the satisfactory capacity to sustain its improvement.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in mathematics to the national average by:
 - strengthening the monitoring of teaching and learning by the subject leader, to check attainment and progress and eliminate any possible underachievement
 - supporting teachers in gaining more technical skills in teaching mathematics
 - closing the gap between the attainment of boys and girls
 - making sure that at pupil-progress meetings, interventions are not only formulated but also evaluated for success.
- Ensure that, by January 2012, all teaching and learning are at least good by:
 - more rigorous monitoring of teaching, noting individual areas of improvement for teachers and setting a timescale for improvement and re-evaluation
 - making better use of assessment information on progress during lessons
 - ensuring that planning, questioning and activities are framed to challenge all pupils, including the more able
 - ensuring that marking and the setting of targets help pupils understand how to improve and, where possible, involve them in the process.
- Enhance the promotion of community cohesion by:
 - providing clearer opportunities for pupils to compare their lives with pupils in other areas of the United Kingdom
 - giving pupils a more developed understanding of their place in the world
 - adapting curriculum plans so that community cohesion is embedded in the school's work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe their children enjoy school. Pupils were seen to enjoy learning and, generally, respond well to the challenges they are given. Sometimes the challenges are not always stretching enough for the more-able pupils. Pupils all want to do well and were seen to be keen to discuss their ideas, although they often lack the time to develop their ideas by making more use of their 'talk partners'. Pupils' level of basic skills and good attendance indicate that along with their keenness to learn and ability to work in groups, they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

In a good poetry lesson, pupils were encouraged to use ambitious language. Some used 'precariously' and 'burnished bronze', illustrating good progress in gaining interesting vocabulary. By contrast, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were too reliant on teacher-led activities and were not encouraged enough to think for themselves, consequently slowing their progress. A good lesson on the reign of Queen Victoria was very carefully planned

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and pupils remembered a good deal from their previous lessons as they were very interested in the topic. Pupils with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities become confident learners through the support they receive and make satisfactory progress in line with their classmates.

Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. They recognise the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are keen on sport. Pupils say they feel very safe in school, as adults look after them well. They are proud of their school and their links with the local area and local schools. They are active in charitable causes and the rain did not deter them from enjoying raising funds on Red Nose Day. Their spiritual development is supported well by assemblies, their links with the church and their celebration of each other's achievements. Cultural development is only satisfactory as it is not well supported by activities organised by the school. Although these activities tend to be good in themselves, they do not form a well-balanced school plan.

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	2
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	2
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?

Good care, guidance and support are best illustrated by the range of support given to pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Several parents and carers commented on how well their children, with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported. In some cases, this was noted as excellent. A good team of teaching assistants work in an effective partnership with teachers to enable these pupils to

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make as much progress as their peers. A consistent approach to managing behaviour is helping to create a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school. The high level of attendance and almost negligible persistent absence is testament to the school's support for both pupils and their families in this respect.

The curriculum has clearly focused on providing opportunities for pupils not only to improve their basic skills but, equally, to present them with creative opportunities. By Year 2, children reach high levels of basic skills and while the levels in the junior classes are not yet high enough, progress is much better in English than in mathematics. In an effort to make learning more practical, meaningful and fun, the school has introduced thematic days, such as 'The Romans', while also taking pupils to visit sites and settings which support their understanding, especially in history and geography. Good links are made between subjects to support the use of literacy, and after-school clubs not only help with the development of skills but also in raising social competence. The curriculum helps pupils to explore social and emotional issues in a safe and friendly atmosphere. Through science and circle time, issues of relationships are discussed, again giving good support to pupils' personal development.

Teaching and learning in half of the lessons seen during the inspection were good, and in one lesson in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there was learning of high quality. Nonetheless, teaching is than satisfactory in many lessons. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour well so that it never interrupts learning and is usually positive. Although planning overall is generally satisfactory, in some lessons work does not always highlight how the more able are to be challenged. Teachers do not regularly enough check the progress that pupils are making in lessons, although they often do at the end of lessons. While targets are used regularly, they are sometimes too broad in their descriptions and not reviewed regularly enough. Marking is improving but there still remains inconsistency in approach as it does not always indicate pupils' next steps in learning. At pupil-progress meetings, although pupils are discussed and some individual programmes for improvement are set in place, these are not evaluated regularly enough to check their success.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have made improvements and plan for more. Self-evaluation is stronger in Key Stage 1 and, consequently, that is where the best improvement is. Here, tracking is more robust and there is a clearer picture of good progress. On occasions, plans are implemented

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elsewhere in the school, but evaluations related to these are not consistently made. The school has implemented programmes for raising attainment in Key Stage 2 but, as yet, these are not effective enough. Some improvements have been made in improving teaching, but here change is not quick enough.

Monitoring of teaching is accurate, but suggestions for improvements are not followed up to check their success. In English, there are interventions and strategies for improvement. Some of these are successful. A range of programmes related to writing have raised attainment, while homework reading journals have a positive effect on reading. However, the same is not the case for mathematics. The school has clear plans for improvement, but they have not yet been put into effect.

The governing body is well organised and visible in the school community. It is aware of issues facing the school and visits it regularly. Members understand data on pupils' performance and question the school closely in order to confirm steps to improvement. The school's engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory. Safeguarding is satisfactory. The school does all that is required to keep its pupils safe and no shortcomings were noted during the inspection.

There is good evidence that the school understands its social, ethnic and religious context well and is itself a cohesive community. It links well with the local community in a wide range of activities, some connected with the church. However, although there are plans to extend pupils' understanding of the diversity of different communities both nationwide and further afield, these plans are at an early stage of development. Although there are planned events to support a wider understanding of cultural and ethnic difference, in religious education, for example, these events are not linked together to form a clear curriculum programme. The school has partnerships with other schools, charities and organisations and these have a positive impact on pupils' personal development. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. It tracks the progress of groups of pupils but its analysis of performance is satisfactory. Currently more-able pupils are not making the progress expected of them. However, the school does tackle discrimination well and there are no reported incidents.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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

Although children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with wide-ranging skills and understanding, these are generally those typical for their age. They settle quickly because of the phased entry of children, so that they come in groups rather than as one large cohort. They understand the routines and become confident and eager learners in the caring and welcoming Reception class. By the time they enter Year 1, they are working at levels that are at least average and in some aspects, such as their attitudes, language for communication, use of numbers as labels for counting and their physical development, a minority of children are working at a higher level. They are well looked after and are provided with a wide range of opportunities to explore the world around them. They play together and learn together well both in groups and independently. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those children choose for themselves, although when outdoors, the range of activities does not support learning as successfully as indoors. Teachers make learning fun and a good range of speaking and listening skills were explored by children in the role-play area, fighting off aliens. They display confidence with interactive technology, playing counting games on the interactive whiteboard. Staff assess progress carefully and use this information to plan the next steps in learning. The practitioners work extremely well as a team and are led well. Leadership fully understands how and why the Early Years Foundation Stage has developed so well and where it needs to develop further, due to accurate self-evaluation and action planning.

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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

More parents and carers responded to the questionnaire than is usual in primary schools. All said that their children enjoyed school and agreed that the school kept their children safe. The inspection judgements confirmed with these views. A small minority said that they felt bad behaviour was not dealt with effectively and that they were not kept informed of their children's progress. The inspection team observed only good behaviour in lessons, at playtimes and lunchtimes. Equally, pupils said they felt very safe and free from bullying. Because parents and carers become very concerned about the tests their children may take in order to transfer to grammar schools, they seek reassurance by asking for information about their children's progress towards these tests. The school provides not only indications of pupils' attainment linked to the levels of the National Curriculum, but also provides information on standardised tests given by the school. None of this replicates the tests administered at the time of transfer but it is, in the view of the inspection team, what can reasonably be expected.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hernhill 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 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 205 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	72	26	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	63	37	37	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	28	45	45	16	16	10	10
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	33	40	40	12	12	7	7
The teaching is good at this school	45	45	42	42	10	10	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	34	43	43	17	17	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	43	43	43	8	8	1	1
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)	33	33	48	48	5	5	4	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	36	43	43	12	12	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	34	37	37	15	15	6	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	33	38	38	15	15	7	7
The school is led and managed effectively	36	36	43	43	9	9	7	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	48	39	39	9	9	3	3

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



21 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hernhill Church of England Primary school, Faversham ME13 9JG

I am writing to thank you for helping myself and two other inspectors when we visited your school very recently. You may remember it was Red Nose Day and you were all dressed in red. You made us feel very welcome. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You go to a satisfactory school. There are many good things about it. Everybody in the school cares about you and looks after you well. This helps you feel safe and, as a result, you enjoy school. We found that you behaved well in lessons and that your attendance was good. Well done! You all get on well with each other and your school is a close community which has good links with the church and villages around it. You know how important it is to stay healthy and many of you enjoy school meals and take part in sport. Your curriculum is put together in interesting themes and topics and you go on exciting visits in order to bring those topics to life. The governing body of the school looks after your interests well.

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further:

- Help you get a clearer picture of what life is like in different parts of this country and other places in the world.
- Ensure that teaching improves to be consistently good.
- Improve your attainment especially in mathematics, especially for those of you who learn quickly.

All of you can help by continuing to attend as regularly as you do and by trying particularly hard in your numeracy lessons.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones

Lead inspector

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