

Harrietsham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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Inspection dates 20–21 September 2011

Reporting inspector Gavin Jones

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

Type of school Primary

School category Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils4-11Gender of pupilsMixedNumber of pupils on the school roll142

Appropriate authority The governing body

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Age group 4-1

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. A total of nine lessons were observed, involving six teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including policies, safeguarding arrangements and the school improvement plan. They looked at data showing pupils' assessments and progress over the last three years, as well as their current work. The inspection team analysed 72 parental questionnaires, as well as those completed by 54 pupils and 12 staff.

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

- The reasons for attainment in writing fluctuating year on year at both key stages.
- The reasons why apparently good teaching is not having sufficient impact on improving attainment and progress.
- The impact that outstanding care, guidance and support is having on pupils' personal development.
- The extent to which pupils understand ethnic, religious and cultural diversity in British society and on a more global scale.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than average and serves a small village and the surrounding area. The pupils are very largely from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from different minority ethnic heritages. None of these is at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average, but varies markedly from year to year. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is average. Most pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage of the school from the pre-school, managed by a private provider, which has its base within the school. The school has a range of awards including Activemark and Healthy Schools.

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

2

Main findings

Harrietsham Church of England Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. However, there are a number of strengths in several aspects of the school's work. These are mostly related to the outstanding nature of the school's pastoral care, guidance and support. At the same time, the relationships between the school and its parents are excellent and are part of the reason for the high levels of attendance.

Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, although very recent assessments reveal that pupils in a number of year groups are now making faster progress than previously. This is the result of better teaching but these improvements have not been embedded long enough to result in good progress overall. For example, although some improvements have been made to pupils' attainment in writing, more remains to be done. Equally, the gap between the attainment of boys and girls remains slightly higher than that seen nationally, in spite of efforts made by the school to reduce this gap. This has been more evident, over time, in the quality of boys' writing, an area the school has under review and seeks to improve.

Children receive a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress during their Reception Year. The quality of teaching here is good. Although the quality of teaching elsewhere was good during the inspection, it has not been consistently good enough over time to inspire good learning on a regular basis. The school is very aware of this anomaly and has tried successfully to make improvements, the benefits of which are just beginning to show. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly by school leaders, and the school realises that more can be done to check on the quality of learning as opposed to that of the teaching.

Pupils feel safe at school and know how to keep safe. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 were taking cycling proficiency tests during the inspection. They have an excellent understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Well-established partnerships exist, not only among local primary schools, but equally with local secondary schools to assist at times of transfer. Although pupils have a satisfactory understanding of multicultural issues, this is not as strong as other good and outstanding elements of their personal development.

All staff contribute to a wide range of assessments and self-evaluation, which are used well to inform the school's improvement plan. Actions by the school's leaders to

address the issues identified in the last inspection have been successful. Several aspects of pupils' personal development, the school's provision and its leadership and management have moved from good to outstanding. The school has a very stable and experienced staff and the governing body is developing new ways to support and challenge the school further. All this evidence shows that the school has good capacity to improve further.

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?

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment, especially in writing, by:
 - ensuring that teachers give pupils a clear picture of the steps they need to take in order to fulfil the lesson's objectives
 - making better use of assessment to challenge all pupils, especially, but not exclusively, those of average ability
 - including sharper success criteria in the development plan which are measurable and relate specifically to improving attainment and progress.
- Ensure that the gap between the attainment and progress of boys and girls is reduced further by:
 - discussing with boys, on a regular basis, how they feel they can be helped to be more successful in their learning
 - monitoring their progress more systematically.
- Raise pupils' understanding of the diversity of the world beyond their local community by:
 - giving pupils a clearer understanding of what life is like in a multicultural United Kingdom
 - including opportunities to compare their lifestyles with those of others in schools elsewhere
 - ensuring pupils have a more developed sense of their place in the global community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children enter the school with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. The vast majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily, although more recently there are signs that a growing proportion of pupils are beginning to make good progress. This is because improvements in teaching are starting to have a more positive effect on learning. Pupils' attainment and the overall progress of some year groups often fluctuate because of significant changes in the size of cohorts, ranging from 13 to 25, and the high proportion of boys in some of those cohorts. The broadly average attainment is reflected in the National Curriculum test results for 2010 and

the provisional 2011 results, which confirm that gender differences are greater than those seen nationally. The school has put some strategies into effect to support boys' progress, but it is too early to see their impact. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and have their work modified to make challenges more appropriate. As a result, they make good progress in their learning. Although the school's efforts to enhance learning for these pupils and for those seen as more able have had some success, they have left some pupils of average ability making satisfactory rather than good progress. Nevertheless, at this early stage in the year, pupils' attainment in some lessons is already in line with expectations for the various age groups, a result of the improving quality of teaching and learning. Recent changes to the school's approach to encourage boys to enjoy writing, is slowly having a positive effect on the quality of their writing. However, there is still work to be done in narrowing the gap between the quality of writing of girls and boys.

Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy school and show positive attitudes to their learning. This results in calm but busy classrooms. In a science lesson in Year 5/6, pupils sensibly planned an investigation into changing pulse rates as a result of exercise. Behaviour in lessons, at play, at lunchtime and in assemblies is never less than good, giving good support to the progress they make in their personal and academic development. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example in the School Action Squad (school council), the Eco group and pupils in Year 6 listening to younger ones read. They have firm views on what is right and wrong and believe that that school's systems for rewards are fair. They are polite, tolerant and very thoughtful towards others and are encouraged to explore personal issues.

Attendance has improved and is currently high. The Healthy Schools and Activemark awards are testament to pupils' excellent understanding of health, diet and exercise. It is seen in action with the school's 'mile a week' running and the way pupils readily discussed diet issues over lunch with an inspector. Cultural development is good but not as strong as other aspects of their personal development. While pupils explore different religions and cultures as part of their religious education curriculum, meaningful links with families from the wider British and international communities are not systematically developed. Pupils' growing ability to use their basic skills, their high levels of attendance and the positive ways they work in groups and take initiatives, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning			
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3		
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3		

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The outstanding care, support and nurture for pupils, whatever their backgrounds, ensures that pupils' personal development is often excellent. Parents and carers commented on the warm and welcoming environment and the help given especially to those children with barriers to learning. Plenty of opportunities are provided for pupils to prepare not only for transferring from class to class but also to secondary school. Excellent relationships exist between schools to facilitate this. The new Family Liaison Officer is already meeting families and pupils to offer a wide range of support. The guidance offered to families has helped attendance to reach record levels and persistent absence to diminish.

Teachers play their part well in this process, as their relationships with pupils are of high quality. This results in good management of behaviour, giving the feeling of a 'light touch' approach. Teachers' subject knowledge is good throughout the range of subjects they teach and, while over time they have not always had sufficient impact on accelerating the rate of learning, the teaching during the inspection was good overall. The school is now looking to fine-tune teaching for it to have a greater and more positive impact on learning. Such strategies are planned to include more discussions with pupils about their learning, shorter gaps between assessments and more support for pupils to see what simple steps they should take in order to achieve the lesson's objectives. Good quality individual lessons were seen in both key stages.

Teachers put the school's good curriculum into effect well. Much of it is based on topics and themes, many of which have links to literacy. To this end, the school has already made changes to make themes and texts more applicable to boys. This is already beginning to have a positive effect. For example, in a literacy lesson based on the story of Robin Hood, boys as well as girls were anxious to start writing and tell the story of Robin and his journey to Nottingham. The school has, at some cost, organised the teaching of literacy and numeracy each morning in single year groups, to sit alongside the mixed-age group teaching in the afternoon. This has helped to raise attainment in writing, as seen in test results from 2010 to 2011. The use of a music specialist gives good quality support to whole classes learning how to play the

recorder. Visits, visitors and after-school clubs give effective support to the curriculum and many pupils take advantage of the range of clubs on offer.

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	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	

How effective are leadership and management?

Effective leadership is driving improvement in a number of areas, especially in aspects of pupils' personal development, the care, guidance and support they receive and in the school's links with parents. The school's improvement plan recognises that further action is needed to accelerate progress and raise attainment, but there is insufficient detail in showing measurable targets for these improvements. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has consolidated previous gains and current teaching shows positive signs of improvement. Data gathered through assessments are shared well with class teachers, with meetings between the leadership team and class teachers about pupils' progress focusing on any underachievement or lack of progress shown by the data. Subject leaders are given time to carry out their monitoring role and to develop their own expertise. They undertake classroom observations, analyse data, check pupils' work and discuss the outcomes of the pupil progress meetings. The local cluster of schools enables the headteacher to meet with colleagues, plan joint training and promote moderation of assessment across basic skills. All pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and there are no reported incidents of discrimination. However, the difference in attainment between boys and girls is stubbornly difficult to eradicate.

The school arranges regular consultation evenings for parents, and uses homework diaries, meetings and notes to explain current curricular themes, written reports and regular newsletters, as well as text messaging and the website, to keep parents informed. The wide range of approaches illustrates how effectively the school has managed to develop such outstanding relationships with its parents. The school has made good provision for its community cohesion both within the school and in the local community. This culminated in a very large tapestry being created by the school and all interested village groups. The school's charitable links with areas in the wider world are already in place and it has plans in hand to make meaningful links with another school nationally.

The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well and ensures that pupils and staff are safe through implementing good safeguarding procedures. Staff and governors have clear roles in this process, and policies are regularly reviewed and training of

staff regularly updated. The governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the school. It has extended the opportunities for governors to visit the school by arranging 'governor days' in which governors observe teaching and learning, discuss issues with subject leaders and the headteacher, and conclude with their own meetings. The governing body has plans to develop this further to include more links with the monitoring of elements of the school improvement plan. The pupils' average attainment and a well-balanced budget confirm that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2		
Taking into account:			
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2		
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	1		
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3		
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination			
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2		
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3		

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle quickly in the Reception class and after less than three weeks, they already come happily to school, share equipment and readily relate to the stimulating and colourful learning environment. A good proportion of their activities are inspired by the children's own interests, while others are carefully directed by adults in order to check children's progress and introduce new skills. Children become confident and eager learners, making good progress, so that by the time they enter Year 1, they are working at levels that are broadly average. Their mathematical skills develop more quickly and are higher than expected by the end of their time in Reception. Their writing skills, which are low on entry, develop more slowly.

The recent introduction of a covered outdoor area has improved children's access to the outdoor classroom and also their ability to move freely from one activity to another, making use of the space available. Children's progress is checked regularly so that staff have a clear picture of what to plan next. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent and support learning well. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding and children are well prepared for the National

Curriculum when they transfer to Year 1. As a result of high levels of care and support, children's personal development, some aspects of which were weak on entry, improves greatly.

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	1	
Stage		l

Views of parents and carers

An above average number of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. A very high proportion of parents were positive about the school's work. In seven of the 13 questions, the positive responses were above 95%. They are most positive in noting that the school helps their children have a healthy lifestyle, keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school. Inspectors support these positive views. A few parents and carers feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour and that the school does not take account of their views. Inspectors looked at these concerns during the inspection. They found behaviour to be good overall and that parents have four parental meetings and a questionnaire through which they can voice their concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harrietsham 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 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 143 pupils registered at the school.

Statements		Strongly Agree Disagree Strong		Agree Disagree				
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	47	35	49	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	58	28	39	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	49	33	46	1	1	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	44	35	49	1	1	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	33	46	35	49	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	43	37	51	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	36	50	35	49	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)	25	36	41	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	44	34	47	2	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	38	34	47	7	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	35	38	53	5	7	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	34	47	32	44	4	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	47	35	49	1	1	1	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)				
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate	
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0	
Primary schools	6	46	42	6	
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9	
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3	
Special schools	30	48	19	3	
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5	
All schools	10	44	39	6	

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.

the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and Attainment:

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.

the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, Leadership and management:

> 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: 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.

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.

the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and Progress:

> 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.



22 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harrietsham Church of England Primary School, Maidstone, ME17 1JZ

It was lovely to talk to so many of you when we visited your school. We judged that the school is satisfactory. You leave the school with similar standards to those of most other children of your age, having made satisfactory progress during your time at school. This is mainly because the learning has been satisfactory although it is now improving.

Some of your personal development is excellent, especially your ideas about leading healthy lifestyles, your attendance and your spiritual, moral and social understanding. This is mainly due to the outstanding care and support you receive from teachers and support staff at your school. We also recognise how well your school gets on with your parents and how that supports you all in school. We are pleased to see how your attendance has improved over the last few terms. We think that the way the Early Years Foundation Stage is led is excellent and children in the Reception class make good progress in their learning.

To make sure improvements continue and standards rise further, we have asked the school to do three things. We would like teachers to help you to make better progress in writing, by making the steps in learning clearer for you to see, and assessing your work more regularly to make sure the boys are making the same progress as girls. We have also asked teachers to discuss your learning with you more often, so that they understand what helps you learn and what does not. Finally, we have asked your teachers to help you understand what life is like for children like yourselves, not only in countries in the wider world, but in different parts of our own country.

You can all help by continuing to attend regularly and doing your best at all times.

Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones Lead inspector

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