

# Higham Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118262
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379578
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Richard Potts

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Maynard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tracy Coombs
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1–2 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	School Lane Higham Rochester ME3 7JL
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	18–19 October 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by seven teachers, scrutinised pupils' books, held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils and spoke to some parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including improvement plans, safeguarding policies and procedures, school data about pupils' progress, monitoring reports and curriculum plans. In addition, inspectors considered responses from 43 parents' and carers' questionnaires as well as questionnaires from 12 staff and 40 pupils.

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

- The progress made by pupils across the school, and most especially the middle and higher attainers, to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging.
- The extent to which assessment information is used to guide and focus teaching, so that progress is accelerated for all groups of pupils, particularly the boys.

## Information about the school

Higham Primary School is slightly smaller than the average size school. The school roll has declined since the previous inspection. It is situated in a rural community on the edge of a large urban area. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is less than half the national average and very few are learning to speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with some form of special educational need and/or disability is below average. Of these, most are experiencing difficulty with speech, language and communication. Similarly, the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is less than the national average.

Prior to the appointment of the headteacher just over two years ago, the school had experienced a period of instability due to temporary leadership and management arrangements.

The school has gained a number of awards, including Healthy Schools status.

**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

This is a satisfactory school and it is improving. Some aspects of its work are good and attendance is high. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at the school.

Determined action over the last two years has resulted in rising attainment and improved behaviour. Senior leaders have begun to establish effective systems and procedures to evaluate the school's effectiveness and this has led to an increasingly accurate analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. As a result, action to improve teaching and learning is becoming increasingly focused, so that the rate at which pupils make progress is gradually accelerating and the gap in performance between certain groups is narrowing. School leaders are aware of the need to increase the rigour of this monitoring in order to reduce variability in the quality of teaching and learning; nevertheless, improvements to date bear testimony to the school's development and its satisfactory capacity to continue improving.

While the results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 indicate that attainment is securely in line with national averages, the school's own data and inspection evidence show that an increasing proportion of younger pupils are attaining levels in English and mathematics that are above those in similar schools. Girls continue to outperform boys, but the gap is narrowing, especially in mathematics.

Improved procedures for identifying pupils' learning needs have begun to impact on the quality of teaching, so that most pupils make at least satisfactory progress. There is, nevertheless, variation between the rate of pupils' progress across year groups, because not all teachers use assessment consistently well to build on pupils' prior learning and to set challenging targets. Where assessment is used most effectively to identify gaps in pupils' understanding and then systematically to match tasks to their learning needs, for example at the end of Key Stage 1, progress is securely good.

Marking is regular and thorough, with an emphasis on motivating learning. The best marking, particularly at the latter part of Key Stage 2, helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work and points towards their next learning steps, but this is not consistent across the school and some pupils are unclear about what they need to do to improve. The school has implemented target-setting procedures to involve pupils in assessing their own progress. While this is a positive development, targets are not always well matched to the specific learning needs of groups and

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individuals and as a result their impact on learning is diminished.

Most teachers plan interesting activities and every lesson has a stated goal. Teaching and learning are usefully guided by detailed plans which ensure that pupils benefit from an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum. The range of activities for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is, however, narrower, with insufficient opportunity for them to take the initiative in their own learning. Senior leaders have worked hard to establish and consolidate common working practices, but there are still inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement that are impacting on the rates at which some pupils learn.

Pupils enjoy coming to this caring school and were keen to tell inspectors about the interesting things they do. Over the past two years, attendance has improved significantly. Behaviour is good and pupils feel safe because of the good care, guidance and support provided by the adults.

The governing body has helped to guide the school through a period of turbulence and uncertainty. It is securely aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and sensitive to the needs of the community it serves. Members of the governing body demonstrate a strong commitment to the school and are understandably proud of the advances that it has made.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- By April 2012 improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that there are more engaging activities for children and greater opportunities for them to develop as independent learners.
- By September 2012 improve the quality of teaching so that at least 60% is consistently good by:
  - ensuring that the challenge of work is more precisely matched to the learning needs of groups and individuals
  - ensuring that all pupils are aware of their learning targets and how to achieve them
  - increasing the pace at which pupils are expected to learn.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by more rigorous and targeted monitoring of teaching and learning.

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.

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

**3**

The work seen in lessons and in pupils' books confirms that attainment is broadly

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average by the time pupils reach Year 6. Most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress and some, particularly those at the upper end of Key Stage 2, are making good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given suitable extra help, so that they make satisfactory progress towards their individual learning targets. The school has introduced effective systems to monitor pupils’ progress and this has resulted in better-targeted teaching. As a result, achievement is satisfactory and improving. While the gap is narrowing, certain groups of pupils, notably the boys, continue to achieve less well in aspects of English.

Pupils enjoy their learning in most lessons because of the interesting activities that teachers prepare for them. Positive, respectful and caring relationships between staff and pupils result in high rates of attendance, good behaviour and a readiness to learn. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they are understanding and tolerant of each other’s views. The school council is proud of its initiative to promote pupils’ health by installing a ‘trim trail’ in the grounds. Its accreditation as a Healthy School affirms pupils’ adoption of good, healthy lifestyles. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community and many are extensively engaged in charitable work for both local and international organisations.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Most teachers make clear what each lesson is about and use their secure subject knowledge to provide a range of interesting activities. However, not all teachers have a high enough expectation of the pace at which learning should proceed. Information

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

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and communication technology is used to support teaching and allows pupils to extend their learning. The recent acquisition of a remotely-accessible study program to promote learning in mathematics has enhanced the impact of homework and boosted achievement in that subject.

Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils’ learning and well-being and make a satisfactory contribution to their progress. Recently-implemented pupil assessment and tracking systems are accurate and detailed, providing a useful foundation on which to plan next steps. Despite the quality and range of this information, it is not always well used to adapt the curriculum to pupils’ differing learning needs. As a result, pupils’ misunderstanding or lack of confidence in aspects of their work are not always systematically addressed and tasks are occasionally too easy or too difficult for some.

Positive and respectful relationships characterise the school and pupils benefit from strong and effective pastoral support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Under the determined direction of the headteacher and supported by effective governance, the leadership team has acted successfully to establish a solid foundation on which to base the school’s improvement. This work is not yet completed, but pupils’ attainment and progress demonstrate a rising trend.

Well-developed mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the school underpin appropriately-focused improvement plans. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and there is a shared and realistic understanding of the school’s priorities for development. Staff and governors subscribe to the leadership team’s strategic vision for the school and are committed to its achievement. The governing body has made suitable arrangements to ensure the safety and welfare of the pupils and staff. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding arrangements were found to be satisfactory.

The leadership team is committed to increasing the proportion of high-quality teaching throughout the school. Periodic checks of lesson planning and of the work in pupils’ books, augmented by lesson observations, have contributed to better provision and accelerating progress. Nevertheless, there is scope to increase the rigour and frequency of monitoring in order to improve the quality of teaching so

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that the school’s ambitious targets can be achieved.

The school is mindful of the different cultural and ethnic groups represented in the wider community and ensures that there is no discrimination or inequality. Action to promote community cohesion is satisfactory and pupils acknowledge and value the culture and heritage of their peers, and of those in their local and national communities and beyond.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The majority of children join the school working at levels that are broadly in line with those expected for their age group. Children work together happily and sensibly in a secure and caring environment making satisfactory progress in their learning.

Members of staff enable children to become well-behaved and thoughtful learners, although assessment is not consistently well used to identify gaps in their learning and to adapt the curriculum to fully meet their needs. When given the opportunity, children are ready learners and capable of sustained concentration, but the range of topics and activities, both indoors and outside, is sometimes too narrow, so that learning opportunities are lost.

Weaker teaching is characterised by an overemphasis on adult direction, which limits children’s ability to pursue their own interests and to develop independence in their learning. Nevertheless, links with home are strong and parents and carers are very pleased with the way their children are inducted into school.



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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was below the national average for a primary school, but almost all were positive. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are pleased with almost every aspect of their children’s experience at school. A small minority of parents and carers commented that they were unsure about how much progress their children were making, but the inspection confirmed that the school’s engagement with parents and carers is good and that systems and procedures to report progress are effective.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Higham 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 206 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	42	22	51	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	58	18	42	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	9	21	27	63	5	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	35	24	56	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	13	30	29	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	10	23	33	77	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	35	28	65	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)	8	19	29	67	4	9	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	10	23	33	77	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	23	32	74	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	21	28	65	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	37	27	63	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	17	40	25	58	1	2	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	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](http://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.
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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



19 October 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Higham Primary School, Higham ME3 7JL**

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly during our visit. We can understand why you enjoy coming to school, because it is a safe, welcoming and caring place, where you are well looked after. We found that your school gives you a satisfactory and improving education.

Here are some of the best things about your school.

- Very few of you have time off school unless you are ill.
- You are beginning to make faster progress in Key Stage 2.
- The adults are kind and caring and plan interesting things for you to do.
- The school works closely with your parents and carers to help you to do well.

These are the things we have asked your school to do next to improve.

- Help you to make more progress by setting work that is neither too hard nor too easy for you, and making sure that all of you know your targets and how to achieve them.
- Ensure that all of your teachers help you to work as hard as you can and make even faster progress.
- Give the youngest children lots of different activities so that they learn to find things out for themselves.
- Keep a close watch on how well you are learning.

Thank you again for talking to us about your school and showing us your work. You can all help your teachers by making sure you always listen carefully to their advice about how you can do better work.

Yours sincerely

Richard Potts  
Lead inspector

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