

Horsted Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118477
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379627
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Sheena MacDonald HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Lambkin
Executive headteacher	Steve Geary
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 June 2009
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Age group	7–11
Inspection date(s)	1–2 February 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

Desmond Dunne

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited two assemblies, 21 lessons involving all teachers, and carried out learning walks throughout the school to look at the quality of learning. They held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority advisor and a local leader of education. They observed the school's work, talked with pupils, heard several read and discussed reading and writing with them, looked at case studies relating to a sample of pupils and scrutinised pupils' books. They looked at the school improvement plan, monitoring and assessment information, the minutes of the governing body's meetings, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding.

The inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. In addition, inspectors considered the responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 81 parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is an average sized primary school with predominately White British pupils. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average and these pupils mainly have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders. In 2011, the school met the government floor standard.

During the last academic year, the school entered into a federation with Horsted Infant School. Both schools share the same governing body and executive headteacher.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. During the past few years, the quality of education provided by the school began to decline. The governors federated the infant and junior schools and appointed an executive headteacher to lead both. This has made a dramatic difference. There is now a very strong, and increasingly effective, whole-school focus on raising attainment. As a result of these actions pupils are now making better progress.
- By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 their attainment is broadly average, however, when they arrive in Year 3 attainment is generally much better than this. This means that, in the past, the rate of progress has not been good enough, particularly in mathematics and writing. This weakness is being tackled so that levels of attainment for all pupils are rising and particular groups of pupils, for example those with special educational needs, who had fallen further behind, are making good progress and are catching up quickly.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are beginning to make use of increasingly accurate assessment information and targets to inform their lesson planning. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to produce extended pieces of high quality work.
- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes make a strong contribution to their learning and to the very positive atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are safe and happy, and attendance is high and improving strongly.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The executive headteacher has accomplished a great deal in a short time. All staff and governors have a very clear understanding of the important weaknesses in the school and are driving improvement through sharply focused and measurable improvement plans. There is a shared understanding that improvements are relatively recent and the upward momentum must be sustained and accelerated.

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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?

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics and writing, so that all pupils achieve their potential by:
 - making sure that assessment information is used consistently in all planning to match pupils' work to their different abilities
 - providing more regular and more interesting opportunities for pupils to work independently and at length to develop and deepen their knowledge and skills
 - improving the quality and fluency of pupils' handwriting, spelling and presentation.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' learning and improving their use of learning objectives in each lesson and series of lessons
 - sharing the most effective practice in the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment is broadly average, but, in recent years, pupils have not made sufficient progress, particularly in mathematics and writing. This weakness is being rigorously addressed and the quality of learning in lessons is improving. This is reflected in the school's records and in pupils' books which show that attainment is rising more rapidly this academic year. Since September most pupils have made at least satisfactory progress in reading and writing and are beginning to catch up in mathematics. Many pupils said that mathematics is now their favourite subject and they particularly enjoy the challenge activities. Pupils' attainment in reading is just above average, and is better in reading than in writing, but there is more to do to develop higher order skills such as comprehension, deduction and inference.

Improvements in progress are linked to increasingly better use of assessment which is now used incisively to measure how well individual pupils and groups are achieving and to target improvements. Some pupils, for example those with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals, had fallen the furthest behind but are now making the fastest progress. Intervention and support activities are carefully evaluated to make sure they are having sufficient impact and, as a result, pupils with additional needs are increasingly well supported. Individual targets are being used

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well to intensify the focus on learning steps and to involve the pupils in evaluating their own learning. Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning make a good contribution. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, they were enthusiastic, collaborated well, sustained concentration and made excellent progress. In a few lessons, the pupils make satisfactory progress because of their own persistence, even when the quality of teaching is less secure. The work in pupils' books confirms that the pace of progress is speeding up. It also shows however, that pupils have too few opportunities to work at length and develop their ideas fully. Too many pupils' handwriting, presentation and spelling skills are not good enough and are hindering their fluency in writing.

Quality of teaching

Most parents, carers and pupils believe that teaching in the school is good and that their children are making good progress. However, the inspection evidence agreed with the senior leadership team's judgement that both were satisfactory. Most of the teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory and about half was good. This confirms the school's monitoring records which show that the quality of teaching is steadily improving.

Lessons are well organised with clear routines and opportunities for pupils to develop good personal and social skills such as working collaboratively and discussing their learning. Lessons have learning objectives and, where teachers have good subject knowledge, these are clear and underpinned by steps to learning which show what successful learning will look like. However, there is a range of expertise across the school, and in different subjects, which results in some objectives being too vague, wide-ranging and, in a few cases, confusing. As a result, at times, activities are sometimes pitched incorrectly with the work being too easy or too hard. Teachers plan together to ensure consistency and share expertise. However, this is not always effective or consistently helpful, especially in the English and mathematics sets and may explain the concerns of a few parents about the effectiveness of the current setting arrangements.

In the better lessons, pupils are actively involved throughout and teachers maintain a good pace, skilfully targeting questions at individuals and groups to probe and extend their learning. In a Year 5 English lesson, pupils explored the features of good storytelling, developed their note-taking skills and discussed their findings. They then applied what they had learnt to their own dialogue. In some lessons that are satisfactory, there are a number of activities which keep the pupils busy but do not extend the learning.

Teachers sometimes relate the learning to real life to make the learning relevant and gain the interest of the pupils. For example, Year 3 pupils explored weathering and erosion by examining features around the school buildings. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils learned to plan a budget and use an excel spreadsheet by selecting and pricing furniture for their ideal bedroom. There is scope to develop this approach, make better links between subjects and apply literacy and mathematics skills in other

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subjects.

Teachers mark pupils' books consistently and the use of 'green for good' and 'pink for think' is widely understood by the pupils and, increasingly, pupils respond to the marking by amending their work. The individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics help pupils and staff to understand what has been achieved and identify the next steps.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

High expectations and well-managed systems regarding behaviour, care and safety are closely linked to pupils' good behaviour and attitudes over time. Most parents and pupils confirm that behaviour is usually good. Pupils feel safe and well looked after in school and this is reflected in attendance, which is above average. They are polite, confident and friendly. Bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with. A few parents and pupils said that lessons were occasionally disrupted by poor behaviour but that this sort of incident is rare and dealt with very effectively. The school is aware that, although behaviour incidents and concerns are carefully recorded, more could be done to analyse and identify any emerging trends.

Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities, for example running the healthy tuck shop. The school council and recently trained play leaders make a positive contribution to the life of the school. There are good opportunities, in lessons and assemblies, for the pupils to reflect on and celebrate achievements. This was very evident in both of the assemblies visited during the inspection. For example, in a Year 4 class assembly, parents, pupils, staff and an inspector very much enjoyed a variety of activities performed confidently by the pupils. They respect others and they have a clear understanding of how people should behave towards each other.

Leadership and management

The majority of written comments received from parents and carers remark on the positive impact of the executive headteacher. Pupils too are keen to say what a difference he is making. He has ensured that there is a much greater understanding about where pupils should be in their learning, clarity about what actions are needed to get them there and strong determination to ensure that improvements happen. The newly formed senior leadership team works effectively in partnership with the governing body, local authority colleagues and a local headteacher to implement close monitoring, support, training and individual coaching. This has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching which, in turn, means that gaps in learning are beginning to close.

Most of the parents and carers who returned questionnaires say they are well informed and feel that the school responds well to any concerns. Recent meetings about national assessments and mathematics have been well received. Arrangements

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for safeguarding are securely in place and parents agree that their children are safe in school. Pupils comment that they feel safer at the beginning of the day because of the changes to early morning routines. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination. For example, when it became clear that specific groups of pupils were underachieving compared to similar pupils elsewhere, action was taken to ensure that these pupils receive improved support and appropriate intervention.

Improvement planning is, understandably, very focused on literacy and numeracy and has resulted in improvements in these subjects. The work in pupils' books suggests that the quality of the curriculum in other subjects is more variable. Overall, the curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Although the pupils talked with enthusiasm about activities such as visits and clubs, there are too few opportunities for pupils to probe more deeply into ideas or become excited by learning. There is more to do to make effective links between learning across subjects, enabling pupils to learn in depth, and provide more opportunities to develop literacy and mathematics skills in a range of contexts.

Although the school experienced a downward trend following the last inspection, this is now being rigorously addressed and the improvements over the past year demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity to ensure improvement. There is a very clear sense of purpose and direction. Improvement plans are well focused and driven by measurable and challenging targets. These are being achieved and revised upwards. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is fully involved in the forward momentum of the school. Initially the leadership style tended to be rather autocratic as changes needed to happen urgently. As improvements take root, other senior staff are developing their leadership skills and making increasingly effective contributions.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Horsted Junior School, Chatham ME5 9TF

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well you were doing. What you and your parents and carers told us helped when we were thinking about our findings. After having a very close look at all sorts of things, including coming into lots of your lessons, we think that your school is satisfactory. There is one important aspect that is good. You are safe and well looked after in school. You behave well in and out of lessons. You want to learn and you cooperate very well with each other and with the adults. Well done!

Since the last time inspectors visited your school the quality of teaching and learning began to slip a bit. When pupils left at the end of Year 6, they achieved as well as most pupils in the country, but they had the potential to do much better. Since last year when the infant school and your school started working together more closely, and especially since your new headteacher arrived, things have perked up considerably. Lessons are improving and you are making much better progress now. Everyone, including you, knows how well you are doing, what your targets are and the whole school is focused on making sure you all do as well as possible. Those of you who had fallen a bit behind are beginning to catch up quickly.

We think, and we know your headteacher agrees with us, that you could achieve even better, especially in writing and mathematics. We have asked the teachers to share their good ideas, make the learning more interesting and give you more opportunities to work for longer on your own so that you produce really good work. We have also asked them to make sure the work is just right for you: not too hard and, especially, not too easy. We also think that you need to improve your handwriting and spelling so that, as well as being more able to write your good ideas down more quickly and fluently, your work would look better as well.

Thank you again for helping us and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

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