

Herstmonceux CofE Primary School

Hailsham Road, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 4LG

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well from their starting points so they are well prepared for their next schools. The school's effectiveness has improved since its last inspection.
- Good support continues to be provided for those pupils who may be disabled or have special educational needs so they achieve well.
- Pupils behave well, are courteous and friendly, which aids their learning. They have a good understanding of their local community.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their education.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have improved teaching. It is now typically good through the school and pupils say they 'really like their teachers'. Assessment routines are used effectively to gauge pupils' progress.
- The headteacher is supported well by staff and governors who know the school well and use this knowledge to improve the school's overall effectiveness. Safeguarding routines are implemented effectively. Pupils say they feel very safe in school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils in Key Stage 1 are not as confident in speaking to others or in listening carefully.
- Some opportunities are missed to extend or apply writing skills within a range of subjects.
- Pupils are not always asked probing or challenging questions, or are set open-ended investigative tasks in some subjects such as science. Subject coordinators are not yet fully effective in promoting high quality teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by eight teachers, of which four were joint observations conducted with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspection team listened to pupils read and observed playtime and lunchtime routines. They observed one assembly.
- The inspectors held meetings with a representative group of pupils, met with the Chair of the Governing Body and held meetings with subject coordinators, and those responsible for the work of special educational needs. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's monitoring and planning documentation, self-evaluation, school improvement plans and the range of information relating to those pupils who may be disabled or who have special educational needs.
- They took account of 26 responses to the online Parent View survey and four written responses. They analysed questionnaires completed by six members of staff.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Carol Vant

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school serves its immediate village locality, but pupils from farther afield also attend. It is similar in size to most primary schools.
- The majority of pupils are White British and there are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. There are none at the early stages of learning English.
- A higher than average proportion is eligible for the pupil premium. This is also true for the number of pupils identified who may be disabled or who have special educational needs. This includes those supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has awards reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' basic skills and has links to other schools locally and abroad.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards which are the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress in national tests.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' learning and achievement in English by:
 - developing the confidence of pupils in Key Stage 1 to speak at length and to listen more carefully and actively to others
 - ensuring that pupils through the school apply their well-developed writing skills in other subjects.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to accelerate pupils' learning so the pupils make excellent progress by:
 - extending pupils' learning through more in-depth and challenging questioning in lessons
 - making sure that investigational activities have a more open-ended and interesting starting point to enliven pupils' learning
 - ensuring that activities have meaningful contexts wherever possible
 - fine tuning the expertise of subject coordinators so they can influence the quality of teaching still further within their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection. The results attained by pupils in the latest national tests, although currently unvalidated, are the best for some time.
- Children have a good start in the Reception class, where they enjoy developing a range of skills to develop their early number, writing and reading. Those coming into the school with lower than expected levels of ability in these areas are supported well so they have a secure start to school life.
- Although the oldest pupils in the school speak with confidence and clarity, whether talking eagerly about their forthcoming residential field trip or in recounting past activities related to the Olympic Games, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not always confident to speak at length and not all listen carefully to each other or adults.
- The school has focused successfully on developing pupils' writing skills since the last inspection so that pupils are willing writers, particularly boys. Pupils in a Year 3 English lesson were particularly enthusiastic to write sentences and paragraphs related to the class story about a 'vanishing village'. These well-developed writing skills, however, are not always used as effectively or extended within other subjects.
- Small-group work, skilful help within classes and one-to-one tuition enable those pupils who may be disabled, or who have special educational needs, to achieve well. Those eligible for the pupil premium have been targeted effectively to provide for their needs and to extend their learning. For example, the school is proactive in identifying pupils' particular needs before children start school and have developed good links with local professionals to provide advice and support. A whole school approach, supported by a commercial scheme to aid pupils' social and emotional development, has just been started to good effect.
- Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills develop well as there are frequent opportunities for them to use these skills within a range of lessons.
- Pupils through the school read with confidence and fluency and pupils say they enjoy reading, recounting a number of well-known authors they enjoy.

The quality of teaching is good

- Regular monitoring of teaching to identify good practice and weaker areas to remedy has resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching since the last inspection. It is now typically good, confirmed by both the school's and local authority's monitoring.
- There are still some variations, however, and not all teaching is at the level of the very best. Occasionally some lessons require improvement.
- Teaching caters for pupils of differing abilities and practical hands-on activities make sure that learning is enjoyable. Pupils confidently explain what they are doing as the aims of lessons are clearly shared with them. Occasionally, however, activities are not always based around relevant starting points or encourage pupils to understand how to apply these skills in day-to-day situations.
- Teaching encourages pupils' moral and cultural understanding well. For example, pupils empathised effectively with characters in a story facing a dilemma for their village. In discussion, older pupils in Year 6 understood the moral difficulties faced by journalists when reporting different points of view in newspapers.
- Those pupils who may be disabled or who have special educational needs are catered for well as planning takes into account their specific needs skilfully. Teaching assistants are adept at providing the right balance of support and challenge so that pupils make good gains in their learning.
- In some outstanding teaching, the pace of the lesson is highly demanding in terms of what pupils must achieve. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 6, pupils had an excellent understanding of how to use different written methods of calculation to solve problems, had an extremely clear idea of what they were trying to do and were also aware

of how to judge their own success in meeting the aims of the lesson. Where teaching is less effective, these features are not as secure; so, for example, teachers' questioning does not always fully stretch pupils' thinking and some investigative activities lack the sparkle to 'hook' the imagination of pupils.

- Improved assessment routines give pupils and staff good levels of understanding about how to gauge progress of individuals and classes. Simple comments indicate 'green for growth' areas to work on, whilst others indicate where teachers are 'tickled pink' to show pupils that they have been successful in their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite, friendly and enjoy attending. They often describe school as being 'awesome', 'fun', and 'brilliant'. They say they feel extremely safe in school and say that instances of bullying in any form are a rare occurrence.
- Playtimes are lively, but harmonious, because there is a range of activities and high-quality fixed equipment that pupils use which extends their activity levels effectively. Quiet areas are provided for those who wish it, with some space to engage in discussion or less boisterous activities.
- Parents indicated that they feel that their children are very happy at the school, and pupils themselves say they feel well cared for and able to approach any adults who quickly respond to their worries.
- In lessons, particularly in those which engaged the interests of pupils quickly, pupils settle down quickly to work, persist in completing their tasks and are eager to learn.
- In a small number of activities, particularly where pupils' imagination is not captured as quickly, there are occasionally those pupils whose attention wanders.
- Pupils move around the school quietly when entering assemblies and classrooms, although sometimes noise levels are high at lunchtimes.
- The work of the school council in helping to shape the work of the school is valued, and members were invited to a regional event to make a contribution for a set of school council guidelines to be used in all schools. Pupils have sought the views of fellow pupils on what helps their learning.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have been effective in moving the school forward on a number of fronts, such as raising the quality of teaching and, subsequently, pupils' achievement. A focus on improving pupils' writing has been largely successful in that both boys and girls now write with greater enthusiasm and skill.
- Staff work well as a team and use information on pupils' progress more skilfully to plan activities which are more tailored to pupils' learning needs. Day-to-day assessment routines now give pupils a clear indication of areas to improve, while commending those areas of success.
- School monitoring reflects inspection evidence that the quality of teaching, while typically at good levels, does occasionally vary between classes and subjects. Instances of less effective teaching are reducing and self-evaluation is identifying those areas still in need of improvement to raise the quality of pupils' learning to outstanding levels over time.
- Recent changes in responsibilities mean that not all subject coordinators have had either the time or training in how to influence improvements in their subjects more quickly.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of activities to broaden their experience and understanding, while providing for an improved level of their basic skills. Information and communication technology skills are particularly well developed and a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs helps broaden their experience further. Occasionally, pupils' good writing skills are not fully exploited in other subjects to extend them further.
- The coordination of the school's work for pupils who may be disabled, or who have special

educational needs, continues to be effective, particularly in designing activities for pupils, the deployment of staff to support pupils and in developing links with professionals beyond the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- continues to be good, as it was at the time of the last inspection
 - has a wide range of expertise which is starting to be used to good effect
 - is usefully reviewing how to monitor, support and challenge the school to improve to outstanding levels
 - ensures that all aspects of safeguarding are implemented effectively and all types of discrimination are not tolerated.
- The local authority provides effective light touch support and its recent review of the school, at the invitation of senior leaders, provided useful insights into both areas of strength and possible areas to investigate with a view to improvement, such as developing the roles of subject coordinators.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupil's needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupil's needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114506
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	401445

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	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Vinnicombe
Headteacher	Catherine Cottingham
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 July 2010
Telephone number	01323 833148
Fax number	01323 834708
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