

Hernhill Church of England Primary School

Forstal, Hernhill, Faversham, Kent, ME13 9JG

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| 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.

- The headteacher and other leaders are ambitious for the school. Through a programme of regular checks, leaders have improved teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- Changes to staff, leaders and governors have been managed well, ensuring they all work effectively together as a team.
- Teaching and learning are good and at times outstanding. Engaging activities and strong relationships with pupils ensure pupils are keen to learn. Effective use of additional adults to support individuals or groups means all pupils make the same good progress.
- Pupils across the school achieve well. Standards are above average in English and mathematics, with more pupils reaching the higher levels than found nationally.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically good. They have a very good understanding of how to stay safe. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is high.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and challenge leaders about how well it is doing. They have a good understanding of the school's finances and the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders do not always set sufficiently clear targets to accelerate pupils' progress further that can be carefully checked and then take prompt and effective action to address them. Governors do not regularly find out for themselves just how well the school is doing in order to challenge leaders and hold them to account.
- Leadership is not fully shared across the school to enable leaders at all levels, some recently appointed to their roles, to tackle inconsistencies and secure a greater proportion of outstanding teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or part lessons, taught by eight teachers, and were accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher for the vast majority of these.
- The inspectors took account of the 59 responses to the on-line Parent View survey as well as talking to parents and carers informally during the inspection, considering correspondence received and reviewing the school’s own parental surveys.
- They held meetings with pupils, staff, school leaders, three members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The views of staff were also taken into account from their responses in the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed groups of pupils reading with adults and also listened to pupils in several different year groups read individually.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation such as policies, including those relating to safeguarding, data on pupils’ progress, attendance figures, the school’s development planning and records of checks carried out by leaders on the quality of teaching. They scrutinised work in pupils’ books and reading journals and looked at the school’s website.

Inspection team

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Jacqueline Marshall, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Peter Hare | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school. It serves the village and local area as well as families from the wider area and towns.
- The vast majority of pupils come from a White British background. Others are from a range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils receiving the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is extra money given to schools by the government to support, among others, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and receive support through school action is average. The proportion being supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school makes no use of any alternative provision for its pupils (none is taught elsewhere).
- Over the past 18 months, all of the senior and middle leaders, other than the headteacher, have changed. Half the governing body has changed during this time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the effectiveness of the school's leaders to secure a greater proportion of outstanding teaching and so accelerate achievement by:
 - giving leaders at all levels the responsibility for checking how well pupils are doing and making sure teachers' planning is always closely tailored to pupils' individual needs
 - using checks on the school's work promptly to set specific, measurable targets for improvement that are shared more widely with staff and evaluate their effect regularly
 - providing governors with an increasing range of opportunities to check for themselves how well the school is doing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the last inspection, attainment has risen and the trend in standards is above average in English and mathematics. Actions taken by the school's leaders to make sure the quality of teaching across the school is typically good or better have secured greater proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels. Similarly, more pupils who receive the additional pupil premium funding make the expected progress than their peers nationally, successfully closing the gap in their attainment.
- Pupils across the school make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is more rapid in those sessions where teachers check regularly during lessons how well pupils are doing and promptly adapt activities to increase the challenge or provide support where needed.
- Effective systems for checking pupils' progress ensure all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, achieve as well as their peers, making and exceeding the progress expected. Along with those supported by the pupil premium funding, these pupils achieve well because the work that is planned for them, whether in small groups, individually or in lessons, is closely tailored to their needs.
- From expected skills and understanding when they start, children make good progress in the Reception class in all areas of learning. They are eager to learn new skills, developing confidence and perseverance as a result of the wide range of activities that are planned for them.
- Pupils read widely from a rich range of texts and are successfully encouraged to draw from a range of strategies to help if they are stuck. Pupils from all ability groups enjoy the guided reading sessions that are planned. They explain their preferences for different books and talk confidently about characters and themes in the stories they are reading.
- In all classes, pupils talk with confidence about what they have learnt in each lesson. They are keen to share their ideas with one another and talk confidently about their learning to any visitor to their classroom. They enjoy lessons, especially those where they are actively involved, although their concentration and progress dip at times when the level of challenge in the work is not high enough.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good, and at times outstanding, because senior leaders regularly check on teachers' performance. These checks help staff to know what they need to work on to raise pupils' achievement. However, some inconsistencies remain, especially in the way teachers use the information on how well pupils are doing to accelerate learning more rapidly. Such inconsistencies hinder some pupils' progress.
- Positive relationships between staff and pupils and interesting activities keep the pupils focused and support learning well. They help to foster pupils' eagerness to work and their positive attitudes to learning. Parents and carers overwhelmingly commented positively on how their children enjoyed school and were keen to attend, a key factor in supporting good achievement.
- Where pupils make the best progress, teachers use questioning effectively to explore the knowledge and understanding of pupils. Occasionally, teachers spend too long talking to the whole class without taking account of the different abilities of pupils. As a result, progress slows for some while others struggle to keep up.
- Pupils build on what they already know and can do because teachers make good use of information from regular checks when planning lessons. This helps them to make good progress. Where pupils' progress is rapid, teachers use assessment very effectively to add additional challenge where needed as pupils demonstrate their understanding. However, this is not always the case and sometimes teachers miss opportunities for pupils to make even better progress by adapting an activity during the lesson.

- Pupils receive good advice on how to improve, both through marking in their books and comments from teachers during lessons. Pupils know they have targets in English and mathematics. In some classes, these are used particularly effectively to make sure pupils know just what they need to do next to improve and the levels they are aspiring to achieve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents, carers, pupils and staff agree that pupils' behaviour is good. However, occasionally, when the lesson does not engage pupils sufficiently, they become less attentive.
- The school works hard to ensure pupils develop a thorough understanding of their own personal safety. For example, pupils thoughtfully discussed the importance of using the internet safely following a recent whole-school focus, reciting 'You must think, think, think before you click, click, click'. Similarly, the experiences of road safety that pupils gain from walking to the local village church help make sure pupils have a good understanding of risk and how to keep safe. The vast majority of parents and carers agree the school keeps the pupils safe.
- Incidences of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying, are rare. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel any problems they and their children may have are dealt with positively. Pupils agree, and know who they could turn to for help if required. They feel that the system of rewards and consequences works effectively.
- The school's positive promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means pupils work cooperatively and get on well together, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is supported well by a team of senior and middle leaders who share her vision for the school. Staff are proud of the school and determined to provide the best learning experiences and outcomes for pupils.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has concentrated on improving the consistency and effectiveness of teaching. Staff know the targets that have been set for their performance and how these have helped to raise pupils' achievement. Teaching, judged satisfactory at the last inspection, is now securely good, demonstrating the effectiveness of this process. However, staff are less clear about what they need to do to improve their own teaching skills further in order, for example, to move from good to outstanding and what training they could call upon to help achieve this.
- The school's focus on improving the quality of meetings that focus on pupils' progress has resulted in accelerated progress in mathematics and for older pupils. These are increasingly used to make sure all pupils are doing equally well. Alongside the appointment of staff, such as the special educational needs leader, they enable additional support, such as one-to-one targeted teaching, to be effectively tailored to the needs of individuals and groups. Consequently, pupils who are identified for additional help, including those receiving the pupil premium, make at least the same progress as other pupils. This ensures there is equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils and there is no discrimination.
- Plans for development have been successful in raising achievement but, at times, they lack sufficiently precise targets that are evaluated promptly and thoroughly enough to accelerate pupils' progress further. Leaders at all levels, especially those recently appointed, are very committed to building on current improvements. Their roles are developing so that they share more responsibility for how well the school is doing and are increasingly involved in carrying out checks to know what needs to be done. This process has highlighted the need to focus next on tackling the inconsistencies in teaching that remain in order to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. They are well known and implemented by all staff to ensure that pupils are safe in school.
- As part of their light touch support for the school, the local authority has provided good quality

support to improve the school's effectiveness since the last inspection. For example, this support has included carrying out joint observations of teaching to validate the school's own judgements and attending staff meetings focused on improving consistency in teachers' marking.

- The very large majority of parents and carers are happy with the school, the education it provides for their children and the work of its leaders to achieve this. However, a very small minority of parents feel the school does not always communicate with them sufficiently well or act upon their concerns promptly enough. Leaders, including governors, regularly seek the views of parents and carers and act upon their suggestions, for example improving the school's website to increase communication.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors check the progress the school makes towards achieving its key development priorities. They challenge as well as support school leaders and hold them to account for pupils' achievement. However, they are keen to become less reliant on the headteacher and senior leaders for the information and data they use to gain their insight into the school's effectiveness. They have a good working knowledge of the data that show how well the school is doing compared with other schools nationally. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and how the management of teachers' performance is used to develop teaching further. They understand that this is closely linked to pupils' progress and reflected in the salary structure. They regularly seek additional support or training to maintain their effectiveness. Governors can explain how the pupil premium budget has been planned to enable a wider range of strategies to be provided to accelerate the progress of eligible pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' 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 pupils' 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

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| Unique reference number | 118647 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 405799 |

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

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| 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 | 189 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Helen Figgis |
| Headteacher | Brenda Windsor |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17–18 March 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01227 751322 |
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