

Halfway Houses Primary School

Southdown Road, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 3BE

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Despite an improving trend, there are still pockets of weaker progress. Standards by the end of Year 6 are not yet high enough, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching is weaker in subjects other than literacy and numeracy. Less priority is given to subjects such as science.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' written work are not high enough.
- The roles and effectiveness of subject leaders are not well developed.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in Reception because teaching is good.
- Pupils' progress is improving steadily. Most now make at least the progress expected. Standards are beginning to rise. The school is helping pupils supported by pupil premium funding to close the gap with the others.
- Most teaching in literacy and numeracy is good. The teaching of reading has improved. Strategies for evaluating pupils' progress are well established. Marking gives pupils good guidance as to what they need to do next.
- Pupils enjoy school and almost always behave well. They feel safe and their attitudes to learning are positive.
- The headteacher has created an aspirational team of teachers. He has shown determination in setting the school on the appropriate path.
- Governance has improved. Governors are knowledgeable about the management of staff performance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons, of which three were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, the school’s middle and senior leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 41 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of school documentation, including records of school checks on the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and pupils’ progress. They also looked closely at pupils’ written work and listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Vant

Additional Inspector

Bryan Meyer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Halfway Houses Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is slightly above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of a local authority and those from forces families) is around the national average. There are no pupils from forces families on roll.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school offers a breakfast club which is reported upon as part of the current inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across all subjects by:
 - setting higher expectations for the quality and volume of pupils' written work
 - ensuring that teachers extend their subject knowledge further so that the quality and challenge of lessons across the curriculum matches those in literacy and numeracy.
- Raise pupils' levels of attainment by ensuring that:
 - pupils make greater and more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school, so that their standards can be raised further by the end of Year 6
 - pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a wider range of subjects, particularly science.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school and accelerate the pace of change by developing the role and impact of subject leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, despite evidence of improved progress, attainment by the end of Year 6 is still not high enough, particularly in mathematics. In addition, progress is not rapid enough in subjects other than literacy and numeracy, particularly science. This reflects the priority given to addressing historic issues of slow progress in English and mathematics.
- Children enter Reception with levels of skills below those found nationally. They make good progress through effective teaching and a well-planned curriculum. Their levels of skills on leaving Reception have risen and are now generally close to those expected.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average. This represents generally good progress, given that some year groups entered Year 1 with low prior attainment. There is some variability in the quality of pupils' written work, reflecting inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- The progress of pupils in Years 3 to 6 has appeared weak in recent years. Historic issues as to the accuracy of entry data may have contributed to this. That said, the school accepts that there have also been teaching issues which have contributed to slower progress. More effective teaching recently has secured improved achievement.
- As a result, standards in reading and writing are now at the level expected for almost all year groups, including Year 6, with some improvement coming through in mathematics. Most pupils have made at least the expected progress this year, while some, particularly in Years 3 and 4, have shown accelerated progress. Progress over time also reflects a positive trend, with all year groups showing at least the expected level of progress.
- In 2012, the attainment of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (pupil premium) was below that of other pupils. Currently, however, there is little difference between the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals and that of others so that the gap in attainment is narrowing.
- Reading has improved. Early Years Foundation Stage children receive a systematic grounding in the linking of sounds and letters (phonics). Older pupils make steady progress in reading. Those with gaps in their phonics knowledge are identified and supported through additional teaching.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of the majority of pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, while there is now a high proportion of good teaching in English and mathematics, teachers are less confident in other subjects. In addition, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of the quality of pupils' written work and are too ready to accept untidy, poorly-presented work. Although there are some classes where there is a substantial body of good quality work, this is not consistent across the school.
- Overall teaching, particularly the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, has improved, because of school leaders' concerted and effective actions. Staff have raised their game significantly, thanks to a greater understanding of data and of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress, together with a much more rigorous approach to monitoring and improvement of teaching.
- Reception staff are strongly focused on driving children's learning. There is a constant focus on engaging children in conversation so that their language skills are steadily developed. Play activities are well planned and purposeful.
- The use of assessment information to plan future lessons has improved, so that the work is often well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers have a good knowledge of which pupils are eligible for free school meals and focus on ensuring that their progress is sustained effectively.
- The checking and supporting of pupils' progress are effective. There is much embedded good

practice. This includes good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own learning, clear guidance through marking as to the next steps in learning, and a good level of awareness among pupils of the level they are working at. There are some opportunities for pupils to respond to marking, although this is not consistently evident.

- In a successful Year 4 mathematics lesson on solving word problems, pupils were clear as to how they should proceed. The problems were based around a scenario, fast food, to which pupils could relate. The activity had a brisk pace and pupils had strategies, based on identifying key words, which they could readily apply to similar problems. Pupils were fully involved and they learnt well. In weaker lessons, usually those in subjects other than English or mathematics, teachers' subject knowledge sometimes appeared less secure and planned activities did not always provide the necessary level of challenge.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are learning at least at the pace they should. Support staff contribute well to the increasingly good progress these pupils make.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is generally good. Pupils are respectful and courteous, and most are enthusiastic about their learning. Occasionally, however, particularly where lessons are less challenging and teachers are less confident, pupils begin to disengage and their learning is less effective. Most parents and carers who expressed a view feel that behaviour is good.
- The school has effective procedures to tackle the occasional instances of poor behaviour. Staff manage behaviour well. There have been no exclusions this year and racist incidents are rare.
- Pupils feel safe and think that behaviour is mostly good. They are certain that adults will be responsive to any concerns and that issues will be resolved promptly.
- Pupils understand that bullying may take different forms. They feel that whilst occasional issues arise, these are few and isolated. Relationships are generally positive.
- Pupils have a good awareness of risk. They are aware of potential hazards around road traffic or the internet, but know how to ensure their safety in different circumstances. They are aware of the risks arising from social networking sites.
- The efficiently run breakfast club provides well for pupils prior to school, including some in receipt of additional funding because of their circumstances.
- Attendance is broadly average. The family liaison officer monitors attendance closely. The school takes robust action to ensure that pupils attend school as expected. Punctuality has improved.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- There have been improvements in leadership and management, but these are not yet fully embedded. There is scope for strengthening the impact of subject leaders.
- It has taken time for the headteacher to establish an ethos where all staff are valued and share a common vision. There is now a strong culture of trust where staff accept that they are accountable for what they do. The shared sense of commitment to the school's vision has enabled the school to improve its provision rapidly. School self-evaluation is thorough and accurate.
- Teaching is improving rapidly as a result of increasingly effective monitoring by senior leaders and external support from the local authority and external consultants engaged directly by the school. Identified weaknesses are followed up with greater rigour through the performance management system. There are a few remaining anomalies in the link between performance and salary level, but steps are being taken to address these variations. Subject leaders do not yet have sufficient impact across the range of subjects.
- The school has had a productive relationship with its local authority in the current year. This has contributed effectively to improving teachers' skills and overall provision.

- School leaders have reviewed the impact of pupil premium funding. This funding is contributing to more rapid progress in literacy and numeracy for some pupils, and its impact in the current year appears to have increased.
 - The school has focused on improving pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy and the benefits are starting to become apparent. However, the school recognises that coverage of some subjects, particularly science, is sometimes superficial. The 'Big Question', a termly whole-school theme which provides a means of focusing pupils' thinking on concepts, such as time, provides an exciting opportunity to develop cross-curricular links more fully. A good range of out-of-school activities enhances pupils' enjoyment.
 - Provision for pupils' social and moral development is good. There are some links with local churches. Pupils gain some useful experience of other cultures through the curriculum, although active links are not extensive. Links with parents and carers are mostly good.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved since the last inspection. Governors are growing in confidence. They undertake training and are increasingly confident about evaluating information relating to pupils' performance and the school's effectiveness. An ethos of transparency has been established. Governors evaluate the effectiveness of decisions made and have begun to assess the impact of teaching on pupils' progress, comparing outcomes to national performance data. They now challenge school leaders more effectively than in the past. They recognise the need to ensure equality of opportunity, to tackle discrimination and to foster good relationships. Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching across the school, drawing upon their first-hand evidence. They are becoming more rigorous in ensuring that pay and promotion are firmly linked to teachers' effectiveness and support the headteacher in tackling underperformance. They manage the budget well and evaluate decisions about the use of pupil premium funding to close gaps in pupils' achievement. Governors ensure, along with senior leaders, that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.
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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 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

Unique reference number	118866
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401789

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Garry Philpott
Headteacher	Ryan Driver
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2009
Telephone number	01795 662875
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