

Hurst Green Church of England Primary School

London Road, Hurst Green, Etchingam, TN19 7PN

Inspection dates 7–8 November 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:

- Over time, pupils do not make consistently good progress. Consequently, pupils have not always reached the levels of which they are capable by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always challenge pupils well enough at their own levels to accelerate their progress, particularly the more able.
- Mathematics teaching does not build on pupils' existing skills consistently to move their learning forward quickly and securely.
- Marking does not have enough emphasis on helping pupils to do better in future work.
- Leaders do not evaluate how well pupils of different abilities are learning when making judgements about the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have taken a number of important actions to further improve pupils' achievement too recently to have checked to see if they have made enough difference.
- The school has systems to check and agree the assessments teachers make about the level pupils are working at in writing, but not in reading and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths:

- Pupils' conduct around school is excellent. They have good attitudes to learning, enjoy school and behave well in lessons. Pupils feel safe.
- Teachers make lessons interesting. They make clear for pupils how they can use what they learn in their everyday lives.
- Pupils use teachers' marking to go back and improve their last piece of work.
- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The headteacher and staff have gained the confidence of pupils and parents and carers. Their actions are improving teaching and accelerating pupils' rates of progress.
- The governing body challenges and supports school leaders effectively in their shared ambition to make the school the best it can be.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 12 lessons across all classes as part of the evidence gathering to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Seven of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- He talked with pupils about their learning and experiences of school and heard some of them read in classes.
- The inspector examined a wide range of pupils' work and considered this alongside records the school keeps about pupils' levels of attainment and their rates of progress.
- He also spoke with parents and carers, staff, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 28 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and a letter from a parent or carer. He also analysed 20 questionnaires returned by members of staff.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and sampled some of its documentation, including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness and plans for improvement, monitoring records about the quality of teaching, logs of behaviour and other incidents, papers relating to the governing body, and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in one of five classes, most of which are mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and children of service families) is broadly average. However, the number of these pupils in some of the cohorts reaching the end of Year 6 in recent years has been very small.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is well above average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The on-site nursery is not managed by the governing body and was not part of this inspection.
- There have been substantial staff changes at all levels since the previous inspection, including the headteacher. The majority of teaching staff have been in post for approximately an academic year or less.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure teaching that is consistently at least good across Key Stages 1 and 2 so that pupils always reach the levels of which they are capable by:
 - challenging pupils of differing abilities at the right level to accelerate their progress, particularly the more able
 - making sure that mathematics teaching builds on pupils' skills and moves these forward at a suitable pace to lift achievement
 - marking pupils' work so that it more readily helps pupils improve future work, particularly in writing
 - ensuring teaching assistants have a strong impact on learning throughout lessons.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - focusing rigorously on how well pupils, including more-able pupils and other groups, are learning when evaluating the quality of teaching
 - checking carefully that recent strategies to lift achievement in reading and writing, particularly for boys, are accelerating rates of progress quickly and consistently enough
 - robustly moderating teachers' assessments of pupils' levels in reading and mathematics to be completely confident that the school's tracking of pupils' progress is accurate
 - rigorously applying national benchmarks to support the school's drive to achieve the highest possible standards.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Variations in the rates of progress mean that not enough pupils make consistently good progress over time. Consequently, the levels they reach at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are not always as high as they should be from their starting points.
- Although the end-of-Year 6 results are usually slightly higher than national figures, the significantly above average levels reached by pupils immediately following the previous inspection were not sustained in 2012. More-able pupils are often not challenged well enough in lessons to promote the rapid progress that will help them reach their full potential.
- Unvalidated results for Year 6 leavers in 2013 show that this cohort made much better progress than the previous cohort. However, at Key Stage 1, attainment dipped.
- In recent years, pupils' achievement in reading has lagged behind that in writing and mathematics. For current pupils, this is less marked. Improvements in the teaching of reading and the link between letters and sounds (phonics) are accelerating pupils' progress. Results of the Year 1 phonics screening check improved considerably this year compared to last, when the proportion that reached the expected standard was much lower than seen nationally. Action taken by the school has also helped pupils that did not reach the expected standard originally to catch up.
- Pupils learn to write with flair and imagination. There are clear signs in pupils' work that action taken to narrow the gap in literacy levels between boys and girls is working, although the pace of improvement is uneven between year groups. Boys' writing stamina is increasing with more frequent opportunities to write for sustained periods. Both boys and girls have very positive attitudes to reading and new books have been carefully chosen to appeal to boys as well.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs usually make at least as much progress as their peers and sometimes more. Leaders are improving systems to select the most effective interventions to help these pupils keep pace or catch up with other pupils.
- Targeted use of pupil premium funding is beginning to reduce gaps between the attainment of eligible pupils and their peers. Careful comparisons of pupils' rates of progress across the whole school are helping to pinpoint where additional small-group or individual intervention is required to help these pupils catch up. In 2013, Year 6 leavers attained levels above their peers in English and mathematics, bucking the national trend. However, across different year groups the rate at which their progress is accelerating remains slightly uneven.
- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress from their varying starting points. Children who start school without the levels of skills expected for their age, particularly in aspects of literacy, quickly start to fill these gaps. This means that attainment is broadly average by the time pupils enter Year 1.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is not consistently good enough over time to ensure all pupils achieve well.
- Pupils, including the more able, are not always challenged well enough at their own levels to accelerate their progress. Teaching assistants are not deployed well enough in the first parts of lessons to help meet the wide range of abilities and needs in classes, so at these times their impact on learning is limited.
- Teachers use questioning well to help pupils make links with things they have learned before. However, mathematics teaching does not always move beyond consolidating previous learning to move pupils' skills and understanding forward quickly enough. Work in pupils' books shows that sometimes topics change too frequently to significantly move pupils forward in their learning in a particular area.
- Marking has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers take considerable time and care

to mark books, and pupils appreciate this and respond eagerly and reliably to teachers' prompts to take action. This tends to focus on looking back at the previous work, which means opportunities are missed for marking to have a greater impact on moving pupils' learning forward by applying the next steps to future work, particularly in writing.

- Pupils enjoy learning because teachers make lessons varied and interesting. Teachers effectively draw links with pupils' lives outside of school to show how they can use what they are learning.
- Effective training for staff about phonics has led to clear, well-paced and engaging teaching. Teaching assistants working with a small group of Key Stage 1 pupils showed their secure subject knowledge by modelling sounds precisely and quickly identifying and tackling pupils' misconceptions. Daily sessions across the school to teach other reading skills are purposeful and targeted well at pupils' varying abilities. In Year 6, the teachers' probing questioning challenged pupils extremely well to reflect on the author's techniques and provide examples as evidence.
- Teaching assistants support disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and others well as they work, giving prompts and checking understanding, but taking care not to limit pupils' independence.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. When children are selecting their own activities, adults focus well on what they want children to learn, looking for opportunities to develop their understanding in different contexts. This, combined with the interesting, engaging and changing environment, inside and out, keeps children purposeful and challenged.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Across the school, pupils have good attitudes to learning. They respond quickly to teachers' instructions and work well together. The positive views of pupils, parents, carers and staff strongly suggest that this very positive atmosphere and environment is their daily experience.
- Pupils' conduct around the school throughout the day is excellent. Pupils are extremely polite, friendly and welcoming. They are very respectful of each other, and the 'buddying' of older and younger pupils fosters good relationships from the start.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take. The full range of inspection evidence indicates that actual or alleged incidents of bullying are extremely rare and dealt with effectively. Many pupils do not believe that there is any bullying in the school at all. There is no evidence of discrimination, including no recorded racist incidents in recent years.
- Visits to the school, including from the police, help to give pupils a good grasp and understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils feel safe in school. They appreciate extra equipment purchased with additional sports funding that is available at break times, which helps to keep them active alongside healthy lunchtime choices.
- In lessons, when pupils are not challenged well enough at their own level, a few pupils lose concentration and their attention drifts. Also, pupils have not fully developed independent learning skills, so sometimes spend time waiting for the teacher's help. Although these factors seldom disrupt others, they slow the progress for pupils affected.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Following a period of significant staff changes, leaders have not yet secured consistently good or better teaching. There is not enough focus on how well pupils are actually learning when monitoring the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, the process helps teachers to improve because they are set clear next steps and supported to achieve these.
- Leaders at different levels have high aspirations for the school but are not always rigorous enough at using national benchmarks when evaluating the overall quality of the school's performance. That said, leaders have accurately identified areas requiring improvement and are taking appropriate action to further reduce variations in the achievement of pupils and secure equal opportunities for all.

- Teachers and leaders have worked together to check and agree their assessments of pupils' levels in writing, but not in mathematics and reading. While the inspection found no evidence that teachers' assessments of pupils are inaccurate, leaders cannot be completely confident that the data they are using to track improvements are fully robust and reliable.
- The school is demonstrating that it has the capacity to improve. The headteacher, other school leaders and the governing body all play their part in this. Staff morale is high. There are clear signs that rates of progress are accelerating. Improvements are beginning to show in aspects of the school's key performance data, such as the improvements in the Year 1 phonics screening check and the progress made across Key Stage 2 by Year 6 leavers. Other important actions are more recent, and although showing promising early signs, leaders have not completed their checks of how much difference improvements are making.
- The headteacher has earned the confidence of the whole community. He values the support provided by the local authority to help establish vital systems and structures. These now place the school on a firm footing to keep moving forward. Parents and carers are very positive about the school, some particularly commenting on the difference made by the headteacher and new staff.
- The range of subjects and diverse activities provided, both inside and outside the classroom, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Varied positions of responsibility, from the school council to eco-warriors and the school's International Dance Council, make an important contribution to the strong personal skills and qualities that pupils develop. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the balance between self-selected and adult-led activities helps children to develop socially, emotionally and academically.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The support and challenge for school leaders provided by the governing body are an important factor in the school's capacity to improve. Governors provided strong support during a period of staff changes, working closely with the headteacher to implement robust systems for performance management. This has rightly increased teachers' accountability and ensured a close link between pay levels and the quality of teaching. Supported by regular training, governors analyse internal and external data about the rates of progress of current and previous pupils to question leaders about the quality of achievement and teaching. They have a realistic view of where the use of pupil premium funding to target additional support for pupils of all ages has successfully helped them catch up, and where there is more to do. The use of additional funding for sports to purchase equipment to extend the range of sporting opportunities on offer and enable teachers to develop their skills by working alongside specialist sports coaches is already increasing pupils' participation rates. The governing body has plans to work alongside other local schools to explore ways to further evaluate the impact of this spending.

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	114508
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	400089

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	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Maynard
Headteacher	Graham White
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 June 2011
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