

Harrietsham Church of England Primary School

West Street, Harrietsham, Maidstone, Kent, ME17 1JZ

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

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.

- School leaders and governors are ambitious and have high expectations for staff and pupils. They have successfully built on their strengths and tackled areas for improvement since the last inspection, demonstrating that they have the capacity to improve further.
- Pupils, regardless of their starting points, make good progress across the school. Standards are rising at both Key Stage 1 and 2 and more pupils now reach the higher levels in national tests.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe because they know that adults care for them. They get on well together and show courtesy and respect towards each other and adults. They enjoy a well-planned curriculum that provides plenty of opportunities to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Teaching over time is good because most activities are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs. Teachers make lessons interesting and engaging and, as a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning. Effective use of additional adults to support individuals or groups means all pupils make the same good progress.
- Children in the Reception class get a good start because of the many opportunities they have to talk about their learning with adults and each other and because staff know children and their needs individually.
- Senior leaders have a very good understanding of how well the school is doing and what actions to take next to make it better. Governors too know the school very well and use this knowledge to good effect when holding the school to account.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Whilst new to their jobs and already knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses, actions taken by middle leaders are too recent to have secured increasing numbers of pupils making better than expected progress.
- Attainment in writing by the end of the Reception Year remains weaker than other areas, although children have achieved well from their starting points.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 14 lessons or part lessons. She observed in all the classes and looked at work in pupils' books during their classroom observations. She was accompanied by the headteacher for all of the classroom observations.
- She listened to pupils in Years 2, 3 and 6 read individually and chatted to pupils informally throughout the inspection. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and at various times around the school.
- The inspector took account of the 41 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as talking to parents and carers informally during the inspection. In addition, she spoke with school leaders, staff, four governors and with a representative of the local authority. The views of 13 staff who completed the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.
- The school's work was observed and the inspector looked at documentation such as policies, including those relating to safeguarding, behaviour, and the school's improvement planning, as well as information on pupils' progress and attendance figures. She observed lunchtime and breakfast club as well as looking at the school's website.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Marshall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In this smaller than average sized primary school, the vast majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils receiving the pupil premium is below average. Only some year groups have pupil premium pupils and in most classes the numbers are below five. The pupil premium is extra funding given to schools by the government to support pupils in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and receive support through school action is well above average. The proportion being supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also well above average. In some classes, over a third of pupils have special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is currently undergoing building work to accommodate an increasing number of pupils and has recently grown to seven classes.
- The pre-school provision in the school is not run by the school and so was not inspected as part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise achievement to increase the proportions of pupils making good or better progress, by:
 - providing more opportunities to write and practise their writing skills in order to raise attainment in writing in the Reception class
 - developing the roles of new leaders, including governors, so they can more effectively support staff and secure pupils' rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their starting points, pupils from all backgrounds make good progress overall across the school. Whilst the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress is increasing, not enough yet make rapid gains in their learning and this means progress is not yet outstanding.
- School leaders have worked hard to maintain the good progress seen during lesson observations in the last inspection and this has been strengthened. Their actions have ensured that increasing proportions of pupils are now making consistently good progress. As a result, while the trend in attainment currently remains average at Key Stage 2, standards are rising and an increasing number of more able pupils reach the higher Level 5. At Key Stage 1, the levels pupils achieve are also rising, due in part to the more rigorous focus on the teaching of phonics (the matching of letters to the sounds they make) to improve reading and writing.
- Children in the Reception class make good gains in their learning from starting points that are typically in line with expected levels in most areas. However, their writing and reading skills when they join the school are often weaker. Although children make good progress overall in early reading and writing, even more can be done to provide additional opportunities to write and practise these skills so that they start Year 1 with the levels expected for their age.
- Effective systems for checking pupils' progress ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils, along with the very small number supported by the pupil premium funding, do well because the work that is planned for them, whether in small groups, individually, in lessons or clubs before school, is closely tailored to their needs.
- The pupil premium funding is used to pay for small group activities in reading, writing and mathematics as well as for additional adults to support these pupils in class and in additional sessions before school. As a result, the majority of pupils in receipt of this funding make the same good progress as their peers, and sometimes it is better. For most pupils, there is little difference between the average scores in English and mathematics achieved by both groups and, for a few who have additional needs and may be up to a year behind, the gap is narrowing.
- Pupils enjoy lessons, although their concentration and progress can dip at times when they are less actively involved or teachers spend too long introducing the work. Attitudes to learning are typically good because the school has worked hard to ensure that classes with high proportions of pupils with special educational needs or larger numbers of boys or girls are engaged and teachers' expectation are high enough to enable pupils to achieve well.
- Their progress is most rapid in those lessons where teachers check regularly how well pupils are doing and promptly adapt activities to increase the challenge or provide support where needed. Pupils are keen to share their ideas with one another and talk confidently about their learning because teachers are good at providing them with the opportunity to try out ideas and evaluate their work.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are encouraged to read from a wide range of texts. Good teaching of phonics means that pupils use these strategies confidently to help with their reading and has resulted in a larger proportion of pupils reaching the national average scores in the Year 1 phonics check. However, the recent focus on phonics has resulted in some pupils being less confident to use other strategies when they are stuck.
- Pupils enjoy improving and practising their stamina and running skills in the weekly 'run a mile' challenge on the playground. These additional sporting activities that are on offer support the school's physical education programme effectively and are developing pupils' healthy lifestyles and physical fitness.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most parents and carers agree that teaching over time and across all the classes is good. This is

because leaders successfully focus on improving the quality of teaching through a structured programme of professional development. Teachers and teaching assistants appreciate the opportunities they have to improve their skills and effectiveness. However, not enough of the teaching is yet consistently outstanding to ensure even more pupils make better than expected progress.

- Pupils are fully involved in what they need to do to improve and pay careful attention to comments teachers make when marking work during lessons and in their books. Pupils appreciate the time they are usually given to make corrections and improve their work. Occasionally, however, they say they miss part of the next lesson because they are completing their corrections or finishing work, hindering the progress they make.
- Teachers make good use of information from regular checks to plan lessons so that pupils build on what they already know and can do. Sometimes, opportunities for pupils to make even better progress are missed when teachers talk to the whole class without taking account of the different abilities of pupils or setting high expectations quickly enough.
- Teaching assistants have a good understanding of what needs to be done because planning is shared and expectations are made clear. They support pupils of all abilities and are confident in their approach. Focused small group sessions and specific programmes are effective in helping pupils to catch up or to build confidence and good attitudes towards learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are good at using questioning effectively to explore the knowledge and understanding of pupils. Discussions during lessons help to overcome misconceptions and, where progress is most rapid, add additional challenge where needed as pupils demonstrate their understanding.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils keep the pupils focused and support their positive attitudes to learning well. This keenness to learn is maintained even when occasionally the pace dips because teachers take too long explaining a task.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly towards each other and to all adults. They consistently respond well to instructions and requests and low-level disruption in lessons is unusual.
- Pupils understand the importance of good attitudes and behaviour in their school life. There is a very positive ethos in and around the school and pupils conduct themselves well at different times of the school day; consequently, behaviour is typically good and, at times, exemplary. Just occasionally, if the pace of the lesson slows, they become less interested or get a bit fidgety and start to chat among themselves.
- An inviting smell of toast welcomes pupils to the breakfast club, where adults encourage pupils to play together whilst others carry out additional learning support activities at the start of the day.
- Pupils get on well together regardless of background. They show respect towards the feelings of others and show care and sensitivity towards those pupils who have additional difficulties or find behaving well difficult. They show considerable maturity when considering the additional help that some pupils may need and are keen to help themselves where possible. This reflects the school's promotion of inclusion and helps to foster good relationships.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and say they feel safe in school. They are acutely aware of safety measures the school has introduced during the building work as well as how to keep safe carrying equipment and moving around the school. They understand different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They say that bullying rarely occurs and that adults are always on hand to sort out any minor disagreements that very occasionally arise.
- Attendance is a real strength of the school and is above average. Staff are not complacent, however, and continue to work hard to improve the attendance of a very small number of pupils whose attendance does not currently match the high levels of their classmates.
- Records show staff have been particularly successful when supporting a very small number of

pupils with particular behavioural needs and their families. As a result, there have been no recent exclusions. Most parents and carers, staff and governors agree that pupils are safe and happy and behave well in school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly regarded by staff, parents and carers and supported effectively by governors. She has successfully built on the findings of the last inspection, raising standards and creating a school where all work together with a clear vision and commitment to continuous improvement.
- The school has taken steps to strengthen leadership further. Key leaders, including governors, have allowed new leaders to shadow their work, enabling a smoother and more effective transfer of responsibilities. Those newly appointed to their posts are developing their role of checking the effectiveness of the school's work and the quality of teaching and learning. However, still new to their roles, the actions they have taken or have planned are too recent to have had an impact on accelerating pupils' progress or securing a greater proportion of outstanding teaching.
- The school reviews all aspects of its work thoroughly and leaders understand the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. They act quickly to address any gaps. For example, following weaker scores in the phonics screening test last year, additional staff training and support were provided. Consequently, results this year have risen and a larger proportion of pupils achieved the expected levels. Staff are aware that attainment in writing by the end of Reception does not yet match that in other areas of learning and this is already a priority for the early years leader.
- As part of their light touch support for the school, the local authority has provided regular support to check the school's effectiveness since the last inspection, for example by carrying out joint lesson observations with the headteacher and providing training and support for staff and leaders.
- Good links with other schools exist in a number of areas to help promote pupils' learning and develop staff expertise. One example, funded by the newly introduced sports fund, has recently begun allowing staff to benefit from the expertise of secondary colleagues when teaching their own pupils. A programme of exemplar lessons, paired teaching and observations the school aims to raise the skills of its teachers in gymnastics, games, athletics and dance to ensure pupils receive high quality teaching whilst positively promoting wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors link their visits with the priorities highlighted in the school improvement plan and their particular responsibilities. As a result, they have a good understanding of the school's priorities for improvement. They draw their knowledge of how well the school is doing in relation to other schools nationally from their first-hand experience and a thorough working knowledge of the information about pupils' progress. This enables them to challenge as well as support school leaders and hold them to account for pupils' achievement. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weakness in teaching and can explain how the management of teachers' performance is used to develop teaching further, closely linked to pupils' progress and reflected in the salary structure. Governors have a good grasp of how the pupil premium is used. They can explain how the budget is used and what the impact has been, sharing this information on the school website. Whilst they have good procedures in place to make sure safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, this has been a particular priority during the ongoing building work.

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	118622
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426475

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	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Higson
Headteacher	Julie Silk
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 September 2011
Telephone number	01622 859261
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