

Horsmonden Primary School

Back Lane, Horsmonden, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 8JA

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement over time is not yet good, despite some recent rapid improvements in both English and mathematics.
- Teaching does not provide enough challenge for pupils of average ability to enable them to achieve the higher levels.
- Written guidance given by teachers in their marking does not consistently help pupils understand how to move to the next level in their learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their mathematical skills to solve problems within real-life contexts.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Children in the Reception class are not always encouraged to develop their basic speaking and listening skills when they are in the outdoor setting.
- Subject leaders do not always check pupils are effectively using their literacy and numeracy skills in their subject.
- Senior leaders and governors have not fully addressed inconsistencies in the quality of teaching to ensure the achievement of pupils over time leads to improvement in the school's performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are taking actions which are improving the quality of teaching so that pupils are now making better progress.
- Governors' restructuring of the school's leadership is now leading to improvements in pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils are safe in school. The behaviour of pupils is good and relationships between pupils and teachers are positive.
- Attendance is high and pupils enjoy their lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with the interim headteacher and five with the deputy headteacher.. In addition, inspectors observed two assemblies, listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work in their exercise books.
- Inspectors met with pupils and talked with them about their work. Meetings were also held with governors, subject leaders and a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation took place with an additional representative of the local authority.
- Documentation was reviewed, covering safeguarding, the management of performance of staff, behaviour and safety, attendance and checks on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors took account of 87 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 10 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Howard Jones, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jill Thewlis

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support from the pupil premium funding, which is the extra government support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and those from service families, is low. In this school it relates to pupils who are known to qualify for free school meals.
- When compared with national figures, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs at school action is low. The proportion of those at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- In 2013, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The interim headteacher has been in place since January 2014. The deputy headteacher was appointed at the same time to a permanent post. A newly appointed headteacher will take up position from September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in order to raise pupils' achievement, by ensuring:
 - teachers' written guidance in their marking helps pupils to understand how to move to the next level in their learning
 - the understanding of pupils of average ability is regularly checked so they are effectively challenged to achieve the higher levels
 - pupils have more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems
 - pupils have increased opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English, especially in Key Stage 2
 - children in Reception have effective opportunities to use and develop their speaking and listening literacy skills particularly when playing together in the outside setting.
- Increase the impact of leaders, including governors, by:
 - developing the role of all subject leaders to check that pupils are making good progress in their use of literacy and numeracy skills
 - strengthening the role of governors to ensure the school's performance improves.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils has not been good enough over time. By the end of Year 6 in 2013 too few pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in national tests. Not enough pupils of average ability attained the higher Level 5, especially in writing and mathematics.
- The achievement of the most able pupils is inconsistent. Although their attainment in mathematics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling is comparable to that of similar groups nationally, they do not make sufficient progress in writing because, as with other pupils in the school, they have too few opportunities to write at length.
- Pupils' performance in the 2013 phonics check (linking letters and sounds) was below the national average. However, school evidence shows that progress in reading is improving. Attainment in writing, an area for improvement from the previous inspection, has improved and overall attainment at the end of Year 2 was markedly above the national average last year.
- Children enter Reception with the skills and understanding expected for their age. They leave Reception appropriately prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Progress made by pupils eligible for free school meals is variable. By the end of Year 6 in national tests in 2013 they were behind their peers by approximately six months in mathematics, reading and writing combined, although some pupils made better progress in writing. School checks show these pupils are now making rapid progress in all year groups.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has improved. Some of these pupils make especially good progress in their reading and, as with other pupils, they are all now making better progress because of the tailored support they receive during lessons.
- Gaps in pupils' understanding and skills are now closing rapidly. Because of the actions taken by leaders, the progress made by pupils across all year groups is improving in reading, writing and mathematics, and this is being sustained.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not consistently promoted good achievement. Therefore, pupils' progress as they move through the school has not been consistently good over time.
- Pupils' learning and progress are weaker where they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems within real-life contexts, or when pupils are not effectively encouraged to use their writing skills within other subjects. Consequently, pupils' understanding is not deepened and their knowledge is less secure.
- Where teaching is weaker, work is not challenging enough for pupils. This is especially so for pupils of average ability when their learning is not regularly assessed during lessons in order to reshape tasks in ways which help them to achieve the higher levels in their work.
- Pupils do not always receive consistently helpful feedback on their learning. There are examples of effective practice, as seen in one Year 3 English lesson in which it is made clear how pupils could develop their writing using alliteration. However, written guidance does not always help pupils understand how to improve and move to the next level in their learning.
- Children in Reception have opportunities to develop their listening skills. Adults use a range of vocabulary to help extend children's knowledge. However, the outside setting is not developed well enough to further enhance their early literacy skills.
- Other adults within the classroom make an important contribution in supporting pupils' learning. This is especially so for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, who receive appropriate guidance which enables them to learn as successfully as their peers.
- Pupils' progress is consistently strong and underpins good learning where teachers use questioning effectively. For example, in one Year 2 English lesson the teacher discussed with

pupils how they could construct sentences to write dialogue with expression. As a result, pupils went on to produce work which successfully made effective use of these features.

- The quality of teaching has now improved rapidly across all year groups. This is because of the actions taken by school leaders to deal with weak teaching and develop teachers' classroom practice so that standards in the quality of pupils' work are rising.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good because pupils are enthusiastic in their learning and eager to talk about their work. They enjoy their lessons and remain engaged throughout to work effectively together in the tasks their teachers set. Older pupils are articulate and confident and children in Reception listen carefully to adults and are eager to play and work with each other.
- On public occasions such as assemblies, pupils' attitudes are exemplary and they conduct themselves with appropriate decorum. During their celebration of Mother's Day pupils confidently read their scripts, sang with admirable gusto and listened attentively throughout. Pupils are equally enthused when engaging in the range of sporting activities provided at lunchtime.
- Pupils take on responsibilities across the school which include lunchtime supervision duties. They also help support younger pupils and act as 'play buddies'. Pupils' movement around the school is orderly and they show respect for others within their classroom environment, although behaviour is less consistently good in the dining hall.
- Behaviour is not better than good because pupils' attitudes have yet to have a stronger impact on their progress.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe. They have a comprehensive understanding of how to keep themselves safe using the internet. They are emphatic that bullying of any kind is rare and that racist incidents and discrimination are not features within their school. Pupils emphasise how friendly everyone is in their school.
- Attendance is high. Pupils enjoy coming to school and say their teachers make learning interesting and are helpful and care about their well-being.
- The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) indicated their child feels both happy and safe at this school.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The interim headteacher and deputy have taken effective measures which have brought about marked improvements in the quality of teaching and more resilient checks on pupils' progress so that gaps in pupils' understanding are being addressed and standards are improving. However, this has yet to be reflected in national tests so that achievement over time is still not good.
- Subject leaders in English and mathematics check the quality of pupils' work and are now engaged in appropriate monitoring of their respective subjects. However, this has yet to involve all subject leaders in checking that pupils are making good progress in their use of literacy and numeracy skills in all their subjects.
- Teachers' classroom practice is monitored and reference made to how well pupils are making progress. The quality of pupils' work in their exercise books is also checked. This process is linked to teachers' pay and progression up the salary scale. Bespoke training is being used, including mentoring and support, to enhance teaching practice further.
- Equality of opportunity is addressed through the school's provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This additional support appropriately involves parents and carers and is increasingly leading to better progress for these pupils.
- The local authority has acquired the services of the interim headteacher and implemented a sequence of procedures which are leading to increased capacity within the school to sustain the improving outcomes in pupils' achievement.
- There is a clear set of actions in place to use the primary sports funding. These entail the use of

professional coaches to enhance teachers' skills in teaching physical education. Pupils already participate in a range of activities during lunchtime and engage in team sports such as football, netball and rugby, and there is also a running club. All of these activities are improving pupils' physical well-being.

- Subjects are now designed to bring about more coherent progression in pupils' understanding as they move through the school. However, increased opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills remain a priority. Pupils say they value how their teachers extend their learning through homework tasks and educational visits.
- There is a range of experiences provided to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Music has a high priority and the school choir participates at events in large national venues. Pupils draw on the techniques of artists such as Kandinsky to express their own ideas in art. Pupils also explore other cultures in Europe and have created their own Native American totem pole. Children in Reception have used Rousseau's painting *Tiger in a Tropical Storm* to inspire their own artistic creativity.
- All safeguarding requirements are fully met and there are risk assessments in place which cover health and safety and educational visits.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have commenced on a series of steps which have lead to a restructuring of school leadership and securing marked improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, although the training they have undertaken is increasing their expertise in managing the school, this has yet to lead to ensuring the school's performance reflects that of similar schools nationally. In the short term the school's budget is in deficit, but competent financial management is securing a return to a healthy budgetary balance. Governors are active within the school and have clarity of understanding of aspects which need to be addressed. They ensure that discrimination is not countenanced within the school. Procedures are in place to make sure that the performance management of the headteacher and teachers' pay and progression reflect how well pupils are achieving. Governors have checked the pupil premium funding is being used effectively so that the gap between the attainment of these pupils and others is closing. They have taken appropriate action to ensure that the primary sports funding is used to bring about long-term benefits for the school's physical education provision.

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	118276
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	439719

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Willson
Interim Headteacher	Rhian Swain
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 November 2010
Telephone number	01892 722529
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