

Halling Primary School

Howlsmere Close, Rochester, ME2 1ER

Inspection dates 23–24 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Determined and effective leadership by the headteacher ensure standards and achievement have risen since the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher, governors and a developing group of middle leaders ably support her.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching and measure pupils' progress accurately and frequently. Subject leaders are involved in this process and teachers are well supported through effective training.
- Teaching is good, and improving. Teachers and support assistants use very effective questioning to deepen pupils' understanding during lessons.
- Pupils, including the very few who are disadvantaged, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above average.
- The stimulating range of subjects contributes strongly to pupils' enjoyment of school. The wide variety of learning opportunities promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Improved provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs means they now make good progress and achieve well.
- Governors hold the school to account effectively. They work closely with the headteacher to ensure teaching is improving and standards are rising. They are not afraid to make difficult decisions.
- Outstanding opportunities for learning in the Reception classes ensure children get off to an excellent start. Teaching is of high quality and the environment is exciting and very well resourced. Children move into Year 1 as confident, independent learners.
- Outstanding attitudes to learning and unfailingly polite and respectful behaviour towards each other and adults contribute strongly to the improved achievement.
- The school's arrangements for ensuring pupils well-being and keeping them safe are outstanding. Pupils feel very safe in school and parents echo this view.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not check the progress of pupils quickly enough during lessons to ensure they are not waiting to move on. As a result, progress sometimes slows.
- Opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in mathematics across a range of subjects are not as well developed as those for reading and writing.
- The role of middle leaders in improving the quality of teaching is still being developed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 19 lessons or part lessons. Nine were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Visits were made to a number of small groups to assess the teaching of the sounds letters represent (phonics) and guided reading.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils’ books during lessons and specifically at a selection of books from pupils who are most able. They listened to some pupils in Year 1 and Year 6 reading.
- Inspectors spoke to a group of governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils, leaders at all levels and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents in the playground and analysed the 21 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of the 44 responses to the school’s own questionnaire undertaken in November 2014 which uses the same questions. They examined the views of staff through the 30 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s records relating to the safeguarding of pupils and their behaviour. They examined information on the progress and standards of current learners, the monitoring of teaching, learning, the school’s development plans, and self-evaluation.

Inspection team

Penny Spencer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Lacey-Hastings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is broadly similar in size to the average-sized primary school, although it is expanding.
- Children attend full time in the Reception classes.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. As there are typically less than five pupils in each year group, their attainment is not reported to avoid identifying individuals. These extra funds provided by the government support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been several changes in staffing, including at subject leader levels, since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding, so that achievement is increased further, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers, during lessons, swiftly check the progress of pupils to ensure they do not lose valuable learning time by waiting for others to catch up before they can move on
 - teachers develop similar opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills across a range of subjects as they do for writing and reading.
- Develop the skills of subject leaders and recently appointed phase leaders in assessing the quality of teaching and learning, so they can play an increasingly effective role in raising standards.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership that enables teaching and learning to improve continually. The deputy headteacher, governors and an increasingly skilled team of subject and phase leaders ably support her.
- All staff are wholeheartedly behind the drive for improvement and their pursuit of excellence is leading to sustained improvements in teaching and pupils' progress, and to outstanding behaviour.
- Leaders use the pupil premium effectively and measure its impact carefully. A long-term strategic plan to remove barriers to learning by supporting families, as early as possible, is being used successfully. Gaps in achievement between the few eligible pupils, their peers and other pupils nationally are closing.
- Senior leaders carefully evaluate all aspects of the school's work and set challenging targets for improvement. The headteacher has successfully developed a strong team of subject and key stage leaders since the previous inspection. They are developing their skills in improving the quality of teaching through coaching and modelling good practice. However, the positive impact of their work is still in its early stages. As a result, leadership is not outstanding.
- Teachers' progression along the salary scale is closely linked to pupil outcomes. Governors check carefully to ensure only the best teaching is rewarded and any underperformance is dealt with swiftly.
- Improved leadership for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs ensures their needs are being met and progress is now good. Individual pupils are supported well to improve their behaviour and accelerate their progress.
- The local authority provides a light touch to this improving school and offers support as requested.
- The school works well with local clusters of schools to develop teaching and ensure assessment information is checked and evaluated. Excellent links with local early years settings, and detailed gathering of information by school staff, result in smooth and successful transition into school for the youngest pupils.
- Since the previous inspection the curriculum has been redesigned. New and exciting topics engage pupils in their learning and contribute to their excellent attitudes. Opportunities for pupils to research information and write at length across a wide range of subjects are frequent. For example, pupils in Year 4 were developing their skills in writing an information text on flooding based on their topic of rivers and water. However, there are less well-developed opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills in a similar way.
- The school provides pupils with a wide range of sporting, musical and creative activities. These are supplemented by many trips and visits, including residential stays. Leaders ensure visitors and trips reflect the diverse nature of British society which is different from the area in which most pupils live. These contribute to the strong development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Activities to prepare pupils effectively for life in modern Britain are good. They are woven into the topics taught to pupils alongside the school values of tolerance and respect. The school's clear commitment to equality of education and to tackling any form of discrimination is demonstrated by the good achievement of all groups of pupils.
- The primary school sport funding is well used to improve teachers' subject knowledge and provide pupils with an extensive range of physical opportunity. Pupils play sports as diverse as badminton, cheerleading and korfbal. Over 35% of pupils have represented the school in a sporting event or competition, and the take up of clubs is high. Good use is made of the school's swimming pool to enable all pupils to have swimming lessons throughout the year. The leader for physical education checks the effectiveness of clubs and sports provision rigorously to ensure pupils' fitness is improving over time.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are rigorous and meet requirements. Governors and staff ensure key policies for child protection and safeguarding are reviewed regularly to keep them updated. Comprehensive training for all staff on recognising signs of abuse gives them confidence to report anything untoward, swiftly and efficiently. Pupils and staff are very well versed in aspects of e-safety through frequent lessons and assemblies.
- Almost all parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, or the school's own survey, would recommend the school to others and everyone agreed their children are happy and safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have the skills and expertise to challenge and support the leaders. They are aware of the school's strengths and key priorities for improvement. Governors have ambitious plans for its future development and share a desire for it to become outstanding. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance in relation to national assessments and make regular visits to check on the

progress of pupils. Teachers' progression along the salary scale is closely linked to pupil outcomes. Governors check carefully to ensure only the best teaching is rewarded and any underperformance is dealt with swiftly. As a result, teaching improves. Governors manage the school finances efficiently, including additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. They check carefully to see if it is having a positive impact and know the gaps in achievement are closing. Governors are extremely vigilant in ensuring a safe and secure environment for pupils and staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school is a happy, welcoming place, where pupils enjoy learning. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered at all times and show a great deal of respect for adults. As a result, learning takes place in a purposeful, yet exciting, manner.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent; pupils are enthusiastic and eager to do their best. They are confident to ask questions and challenge each other's views. They show high levels of concentration during their activities and stick at a problem until it is solved.
- Levels of cooperation and teamwork are high. Pupils listen carefully to each other's views during group tasks and are happy to share ideas. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, a group of the most-able pupils successfully worked together to produce posters explaining how to find the volume of a cylinder and explore the use of pi, which they shared with the rest of the class.
- Children in the Reception classes show equally high levels of resilience and cooperation when constructing runways and roads and building models.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They take care of it and use resources sensibly. They take a pride in their work and present it neatly.
- Older pupils are excellent role models. They take responsibility as play leaders, library and corridor monitors, in a highly mature fashion.
- The school has some pupils with challenging behaviour. However, consistent use of the behaviour policy and clear individual plans for support have resulted in significant improvements over time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are cared for exceptionally well and there is very strong support for families. The work of the parent support worker is highly instrumental in supporting families to improve attendance and become involved in their children's learning. As a result, pupils who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged make good progress.
- The school is very rigorous in its checks on adults to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Procedures for visitors are secure and all staff are vigilant when about the school.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe in a variety of situations. For example, pupils in Year 6 learn how to save lives in the school's swimming pool. This is a valuable skill within the local area, which is situated between two rivers.
- The school's extensive grounds, including the Forest School area, are regularly checked for risk. The rules for safe play produced as a result of the checks are understood by everyone. Pupils use these areas safely and confidently.
- Discussions with leaders, pupils and parents confirmed that bullying is extremely rare. Everyone agreed that, if it should occur, staff would quickly deal with it and resolve the issues. Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, including when using social media.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and improved since the previous inspection. Rigorous monitoring and high expectations by leaders ensure staff changes are managed efficiently and recruitment processes are effective in employing high quality personnel.
- Staff have high expectations for pupils' progress. They plan challenging tasks that stretch pupils and make them think. However, a very few teachers do not assess pupils' learning quickly enough in lessons, or expect pupils to wait until everyone has caught up before they can move on. As a result, progress slows, especially for the most able.
- Pupils in all year groups read with enjoyment and enthusiasm. Phonics is taught well and pupils make rapid progress. Younger pupils who read to inspectors used their phonic knowledge well to decode

unfamiliar words. Older pupils use a range of methods and read with confidence and expression. Good use is made of exciting and interesting stories within the topics to promote writing and reading comprehension.

- Teachers are skilled at using writing to link together different subjects and topics. Pupils understand how to write for a purpose and demonstrate this frequently in their work. For example, pupils in Year 4 research the effects of being flooded through interviews with local people. They use the information to write clear guidelines to support others who might experience the same situation.
- Mathematics teaching continues to develop in line with the new mathematics curriculum. Good training and a revised policy ensure teachers are confident in their approach. Pupils make good progress in the basic skills and work is challenging. Although there are frequent opportunities for pupils to solve problems and undertake investigations, the links with topics and opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects are not as well developed as those for English.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. Support is effective. Staff have well-developed skills in asking questions that make pupils think critically. Pupils' responses are challenged and extended in order to deepen their understanding.
- Very positive relationships, coupled with pupils' desire to do well, help pupils to make good progress. Teachers use a wide range of interesting resources to keep pupils engaged and help them find solutions to problems.
- Work in books is marked thoroughly and effectively. Pupils understand the marking system and respond regularly to their teachers' comments. They are confident to assess their own and their friends' work. For example, in two separate art sessions in Year 1 and Year 5, pupils gave sensitive, critical comments on each other's paintings, and hints as to how things could be improved.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. Work is carefully planned to ensure pupils are challenged. However, support is readily available to give pupils confidence or specific extra help.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. All pupils make at least good progress from their individual starting points. Standards in 2014 for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment information for current pupils indicates this is on course to be sustained in 2015.
- In Year 1, pupils read confidently and use their understanding of phonics to read unfamiliar words. In the national phonic check for Year 1 pupils in 2014, almost all pupils reached the expected standard, which was better than national expectations. All the pupils in Year 2 who retook the check were successful. Information for current pupils in 2015 indicates this high standard is on track to be maintained.
- The good progress in reading continues through Key Stage 2 and pupils develop good reading habits. The slight dip in progress in reading overall in 2014 was carefully analysed by leaders. The cohort was subject to increased levels of pupils with special needs arriving in school during Year 6. Assessment information focusing on pupils who are not mobile was above average.
- Achievement in writing is good. Pupils make good progress to reach above-average standards. Work scrutinised in books supports teachers' assessments. Examples from pupils in all year groups show high levels of maturity, coupled with accurate spelling and grammar.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics. Progress is good and standards in all year groups are high, and improving. Recent assessment information for year groups other than Year 6 indicates the proportions of pupils exceeding expectations is high.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. A dip in progress in published results in 2014 is attributed to pupil mobility, following careful analysis by leaders. Staff support current pupils skilfully and achievement is improved.
- The very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. Their achievement is in line with, or exceeds, their peers and other pupils nationally.
- The most-able pupils make good progress and many reach the higher levels of attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Current assessment information for these pupils in 2015 indicates this is set to improve further.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Outstanding leadership and consistently high quality teaching are enabling children in the Reception classes to achieve very well. They make outstanding progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development is above average by the end of the Reception year.
- Regular checks on the quality of teaching by the early years leader, followed by training and observation, have ensured that teaching is constantly improving.
- Most children join the school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age, except in the areas of reading, writing and number, which are below. Accurate assessment and the provision of a wide variety of tasks to develop children's skills in these areas enable them to catch up quickly. Outstanding progress from their starting points ensures most children achieve a good level of development in these specific areas by the time they move into Year 1.
- Children use their developing understanding of phonics to write and spell with increasing accuracy. Writing is imaginative and pupils enjoy recording their experiences.
- The range of activities available to children both inside and outside is carefully planned from children's interests. Children concentrate for long periods and show great resilience in sticking at a task until it is completed. For example, one child used her knowledge of shape and space to construct a building from small bricks. She spent a long time measuring different bricks until she finally achieved two pillars of equal height, ensuring the building would stand up correctly. Her pleasure when she achieved success was a joy to observe.
- Activities are exciting and well matched to children's interests and they provide high levels of challenge for all groups. There are exceptionally high expectations from staff and children rise to the challenge. For example, children playing in the mud kitchen safely used small versions of real garden tools, such as spades, forks and trowels, to dig for treasure and create food for the pirates with minimal adult intervention.
- Behaviour is consistently good, and often exemplary. Children follow instructions quickly, play well with each other and have good strategies to sort out any minor disagreements.
- Independence is encouraged during all activities and children know how to access equipment and choose resources to complete their tasks. They independently choose from a wide range of healthy snacks, serve themselves and wash up their plates afterwards, so developing good habits and life skills.
- The outdoor space is extensive and pupils use it well. There are plenty of opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. The addition of a Forest School creates an extra dimension to the learning. Children hunt for bugs, climb trees and create dens in a safe environment where taking risks are encouraged.
- Support for disabled children or those who have special educational needs are effective. Adults provide one-to-one support where needed and arrange extra opportunities for these children to practise their skills.
- Leaders form good relationships with nursery providers. Regular visits and opportunities for staff to meet with parents and observe learning ensure children move into school without fuss. Provision for the move into Year 1 is equally strong.
- Safeguarding procedures are very effective in ensuring that children are well cared for and kept very safe. Leaders ensure activities are carefully assessed for risk and that children fully understand the rules before they are allowed to access them. For example, two boys dismantling a clock and a telephone explained why they were wearing safety glasses to protect their eyes.
- Parents are very pleased with the provision provided by the school. They feel their children make good progress and are well looked after.

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	118326
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	462391

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Tickner
Headteacher	Wendy Donnelly
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 May 2013
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