

Hurst Green Church of England Primary School

London Road, Hurst Green, Etchingham, East Sussex TN19 7PN

Inspection dates 4–5 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The interim leadership teams, staff and governors have ensured that the school has improved since the previous inspection.
- Despite changes in leadership, the focus on pupils' learning and well-being has not wavered. Pupils now make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and achieve well.
- Teaching has improved and is now good. Teachers plan activities that interest and engage pupils. They use assessment information increasingly well to ensure that learning builds on pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils know how to improve their work because teachers mark work carefully and comment on what could be better.
- Pupils develop as well-rounded, confident individuals who enjoy their time in school. They are friendly, caring and well mannered.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground. They feel safe and happy at school and well looked after.
- Children get a good start to school in the early years. They make good progress, rapidly develop confidence and independence and are ready for continuing their learning in Year 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Subject leaders do not yet have sufficient impact on further improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The presentation of pupils' work is not of a high enough standard.
- Pupils, especially the most able, do not make the same rapid progress in all year groups because expectations of what they are able to achieve are not always high enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the highest expectations of what pupils, especially the most able, are able to achieve in order to promote the continued improvement in pupils' progress at a rapid pace in every year group.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders so that they have a greater impact on further improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve pupils' presentation of their work in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- There has been considerable turbulence in the senior leadership of the school over the past year. The governors and the local authority have ensured that, during this time, the focus on pupils' learning and well-being has been paramount. As a result, the school has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching and the progress pupils make are now good.
- The current interim leadership team has sustained and built on the strengths forged by the previous team to ensure further improvement in a short space of time. They have taken rapid and effective action.
- Throughout the changes, the interim leadership teams have been effectively supported by the senior teacher, who, as acting head of school, has provided continuity for staff, pupils and parents.
- The current consultant headteachers have secured the confidence of parents and staff and morale is high. One parent echoed the views of several others with the comment, 'During this time the staff have really stepped up to help our children through the difficult period. In my opinion the children responded very well and have continued to be happy, polite and dedicated pupils. The staff have been very dedicated and enthusiastic too, which is brilliant and gives a lot of faith and reassurance to parents.'
- Senior leaders, staff and governors share the ambition and determination to provide the best for the pupils. One member of staff commented, 'I feel that the potential of the school is limitless. The whole team pull together and the children reflect how we all work as a school family and community. I am proud to say I'm a member of the Hurst Green school team.' Another wrote, 'We have a shared vision for improvement amongst the teachers, leaders and governors and a renewed energy.'
- The school's own checks on its performance in all areas of its work are accurate and provide a clear steer for further improvement. There is a clear, shared understanding of the strengths of the school and the key priorities for further development. Senior leaders hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- Subject leaders have clear action plans for the development of their subjects and good subject knowledge. Senior leaders have correctly identified, however, that the role of subject leaders is not developed enough to enable them to have an increased impact and influence on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- Teachers carefully plan the subjects taught to engage pupils' interests. Learning is enriched by extra activities that inspire and motivate pupils as well as giving them opportunities to learn new skills. Pupils said how much they enjoy the range of clubs and residential and day trips, which provide memorable learning experiences.
- The school makes good use of the primary physical education and sport funding. The funding is spent in a range of ways to enhance the existing good provision for physical education. These include employing sports specialists and coaches. They work with and enhance the skills of pupils and teachers and therefore improve outcomes for pupils. There is increased pupil participation in a wide range of sporting activities during the school day and through clubs and sports competitions. Pupils achieve good standards in a wide range of activities, including cross-country, football, athletics, tag rugby, multiskills, horse riding and fencing.
- The school uses the additional funding for the small number of disadvantaged pupils effectively. It is used to provide a range of additional support as appropriate to the needs of the pupils. This ensures that they make similar progress to others, as well as including these pupils in the full life of the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well and underpins all of the school's work. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because all staff and pupils promote and demonstrate fundamental British values in all areas across the school. Tolerance and respect are fostered effectively through the school's values, the subjects taught, collective worship and assemblies. Pupils learn about and celebrate different religions and cultures.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are mostly positive about the work of the school and what it offers their children. There were a few concerns expressed over the changes in leadership over the past year, although most think that the staff have worked hard to ensure pupils have continued to enjoy school. One parent simply said, 'Approve of current leadership team', and others commented on the fact that more communication and information are being given to parents.
- The local authority has been very active in working with the school to ensure effective interim leadership has been in place. The school and the local authority have worked well together to ensure that the drive for improvement has been maintained and has been successful.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- has responded promptly to the findings of a recent review, has taken the necessary action and is now more effective in its work
 - has the appropriate information from senior leaders and from governors’ monitoring visits to provide a good level of challenge to leaders to ensure the school continues to improve
 - knows the strengths of the school and the key priorities for improvement
 - understands the new assessment information and knows how pupils’ achievement compares with others
 - is aware of the quality of teaching and is involved in decisions relating to promotion and pay increases
 - ensures that additional funding is used effectively through monitoring to determine that it is making a difference for pupils
 - has worked tirelessly with the local authority to secure the future, stable leadership of the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met. All staff are trained, policies are up to date and procedures are robust and well known by all staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching across the school is now good. As a result, pupils’ outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are good. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to providing the best for pupils. They are keen to learn and improve.
- Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good and pupils want to do well and work hard. Pupils are confident to take risks with their learning and express their opinions, as they know they will be valued. A group of pupils agreed with one who said that, ‘The teachers are great. If you’re stuck or don’t understand something, they always help you.’
- Teachers generally have high expectations for pupils and challenge them accordingly. Sometimes, however, insufficient demands are made on pupils, particularly the most able, to make the progress of which they are capable.
- There is a calm and industrious atmosphere for learning across the school. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and strive to do their best.
- Pupils say that they know how to improve their work because teachers make helpful comments, either verbal or written, and they have time to respond to them and correct any misconceptions. The school’s policy for marking and feedback is used consistently and effectively across the school.
- Teachers make sure that pupils are clear about what they need to do to succeed in each lesson and give pupils the opportunity to reflect on their learning and assess for themselves how well they think they have done. On occasion, however, there are too many ‘learning intentions’ for pupils to focus in depth on their successes.
- Teachers use technology well to support teaching, learning and assessment. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing pupils’ skills in reading, writing and mathematics, with good opportunities to develop these skills in other subjects.
- Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils well to extend pupils’ thinking, understanding and depth of learning. Teachers’ questions and pupils’ responses help teachers to check on learning and pick up any misunderstandings to help pupils make good progress.
- Teachers provide interesting lessons that capture the interest of pupils and motivate them to learn well. Pupils in Year 2, for example, were particularly enthusiastic to pose questions to a pupil who was acting in role as the main character of the story *The Lonely Beast*. This helped them to find out more about the story. They made good progress in formulating questions and developing empathy for the character.
- Pupils’ good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning help them to make good progress. Pupils in Year 6, for example, worked together extremely well to explore the order of mathematical operations. They listened to and challenged each other and were able to confidently explain the thinking and reasoning for their answers.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use assessment information increasingly well to ensure that learning builds on pupils’ individual needs. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants. They ensure that these pupils are fully engaged in learning and their various needs are well met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop as well-rounded individuals who are confident, articulate and appreciative of all that the school offers them. They thoroughly enjoy school and thrive in a happy, caring environment.
- Pupils are polite and friendly and respectful of adults and each other. Most pupils show understanding and tolerance for diversity in the school and wider community. A group agreed with one pupil who said, 'We're mostly all Christians but we don't expect everyone to agree with us and we respect other people's views and beliefs.'
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that the school helps them to learn how to stay safe out of school, for example through visitors who talk about fire safety and road safety. They know how to stay safe when using the internet and social media and older pupils promote this awareness through designing posters and reminders around the school.
- Pupils have a good awareness that bullying can take different forms. They say that they are not aware of any bullying in school. They are confident, however, that if they had any problems or worries in school or at home they could talk to their teachers who would listen and help them.
- Attendance has improved and is above average.
- Most parents agree that their children feel safe, are well looked after and are happy at school. One parent commented, 'The children feel loved and safe at school.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive, which helps them learn well. They are attentive, resilient and show good levels of concentration and perseverance.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and considerate to each other, adults and visitors to the school. They respond promptly to staff requests. They appreciate the new system of stopping what they are doing and being quiet when adults raise their hands and said, 'It's much better than teachers clapping or shouting.'
- Pupils show responsible attitudes at social times, in the playground, at lunchtimes and around the school. Sometimes, as seen in an assembly, their behaviour is exemplary.
- School records confirm that behaviour is good over time and that pupils learn without fear of any type of discrimination.
- Very occasionally, when pupils' interest is not sustained in lessons, some can become distracted and lose their focus on learning, which is why behaviour is not yet outstanding.
- Most parents agree that the school ensures pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. By the end of Year 6, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Caution needs to be taken when interpreting published achievement data due to the small and fluctuating numbers in Year 2 and Year 6. For example, in Year 6 in 2015, one pupil represented over 8% of the group.
- Pupils' work in their books and the school's checks on progress show that pupils currently in the school make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is a little uneven, however, across year groups. It is strongest in Years 5 and 6 and more recently in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning in other subjects and particularly the range of sporting opportunities available to them. Most pupils are achieving standards expected for their age across a range of subjects.
- In 2015, all pupils made at least the expected progress by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion making progress that was better than expected was considerably above average in all three subjects. Almost all pupils reached at least the expected level of attainment. This was significant, as the starting point for these pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 2 was well below average.
- By the end of Year 2 in 2015, pupils made good progress overall and their attainment was a little above

average in reading, writing and mathematics. This was a marked improvement from previous years where there had been underachievement in Key Stage 1. Progress in reading and mathematics was stronger than it was in writing.

- The most-able pupils currently in the school are generally challenged to achieve well. There are occasions, however, when pupils are not challenged sufficiently well. As pupils are now moving into Key Stage 1 having achieved well and made good progress, expectations, particularly for the most-able pupils, are not always high enough.
- In 2015 in Year 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics improved from the previous year and was above the national average in writing and just below average in reading and mathematics. In Year 6, the proportion reaching the higher level in reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling was above average and below in mathematics. Leaders identified that this was due to gaps in pupils' learning in aspects of mathematical knowledge. The new mathematics approach ensures that all areas of mathematics are fully covered.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress to other pupils in the school and often better progress than other pupils nationally. There were too few eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2015 to comment specifically on their attainment. However, the school ensured that any gaps in achievement have narrowed or closed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to others in school and other pupils nationally. There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2015 to comment in detail on their achievement. Pupils benefit, however, from additional support in lessons and when working individually or in small groups outside of the classroom.
- In the 2015 phonics screening check (linking sounds and letters) for pupils in Year 1, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was above the national figure. This was a significant improvement from the previous two years when the proportion was below the national figure and is a result of effective teaching for pupils of differing abilities. Pupils who had moved into Year 2 were effectively supported to catch up to the required standard.
- Pupils use their phonic skills well to help them to read unfamiliar words. As they progress, they develop and use a range of strategies to help them to read and make sense of what they are reading. Reading for enjoyment is promoted exceptionally well and pupils of all abilities expressed a love of books. One Year 1 pupil said that his enjoyment of reading was 'as big as the size of the whole school'. Pupils are able to express their preferences for different authors and styles of writing. The most-able, fluent readers are pleased to be able to make their own choices about what they read. Pupils also enjoy the class texts such as *Odysseus* and *Skellig*, which are often starting points for work across a range of subjects.
- Pupils have increased opportunities to write across a range of subjects as well as in English lessons, which is helping to lift progress in writing to match that in reading and mathematics.
- In mathematics, a new approach to teaching and learning has recently been introduced that fully meets the requirements of the new National Curriculum. The impact of this is already evident in the pupils' work, which shows how skills are being built upon, and good progress is being made.
- The presentation of pupils' work is inconsistent across classes and subjects. This is because the school does not have an agreed approach or consistent expectations. As a result, although there are some good examples of neat, well presented work, often it is untidy and not well presented. This can on occasion have an adverse impact on learning. For example, in mathematics, some pupils are confused with place value when they do not put one number in one square in their books. Leaders have correctly identified the presentation of pupils' work as an area to improve.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge which vary from year to year but are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the Reception Year and are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- In 2015, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development increased significantly from previous years and was above that found nationally.
- Children's achievement has improved mainly because of a determined and successful focus on their writing, phonics and reading.
- Effective leadership of the early years ensures that children learn effectively in a stimulating, safe and secure environment. There is a welcoming, friendly atmosphere, children are happy and settle calmly into the routines of the day.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. There is strong and effective teamwork between the teacher and skilled teaching assistant. They plan activities that capture the interests of the children and use assessments well to plan the next steps for learning. Assessments are carefully collected for each child in a learning journal. Comments and photographs and the effective use of technology create an effective record of children's progress.
- Children's language and communication skills are promoted well. They are prompted to extend their thinking and vocabulary through careful questioning when they choose activities for themselves and when they are learning directly with the teacher.
- The children have many opportunities to use writing as a means of communication and so develop good early writing skills. During the inspection, children were making models with small blocks and, without prompting by adults, wrote labels to inform others what the models were. For example, one child made lots of marks and some recognisable letters and told the inspector that it said, 'This is a carriage for a princess.' Children were very keen to show the inspector their number skills by counting the number of blocks in their models and were very proud of their writing displayed around the room.
- There are good procedures to get to know the children and their families before they start at school and ongoing good relationships with parents who are welcome in the class every morning with their children.
- The early years team promotes children's independence well and children develop confidence and enquiring minds as a result. Behaviour is good. Children share and cooperate well with each other at work and play in the classroom and in the outdoor area. They were engrossed in the 'superheroes' theme, dressing up and developing their language, imagination and creativity in the superhero hideout and the superhero rescue centre.
- Staff ensure that all the safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. They are vigilant in keeping children safe and teaching children how to keep themselves safe. They take all the necessary actions to support any child whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

School details

Unique reference number	114508
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10002390

This inspection 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	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clifford Smith
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Keith Cheetham
Telephone number	01580 860375
Website	www.hurstgreen.e-sussex.sch.uk
Email address	office@hurstgreen.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There is a nursery on the school site, which is managed by a private provider and subject to a separate inspection.
- Over the past year, there have been several changes in the leadership of the school due to the headteacher's ill health and subsequent resignation. The local authority has initiated two interim leadership teams. The current team of two consultant headteachers started at the school at the beginning of October and will stay until future secure and stable leadership is in place.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in six lessons. She talked to pupils about their work and looked at the work in pupils' books. She observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school. The inspector also heard some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the consultant headteachers, the acting head of school and other staff with key leadership responsibilities.
- Discussions were held with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documents including: the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The inspector looked at the 24 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 10 written comments. She also took account of 21 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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