

Halstead Community Primary School

Otford Lane, Halstead, Kent TN14 7EA

Inspection dates	3–4 March 2016
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 determined leadership of the headteacher, along with the effective support of senior teachers, have brought about whole-school improvement.
- Teaching is increasingly effective, and pupils make good progress across the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs or disability receive good support and are making good progress.
- Attainment is rising throughout the school and has been rising year on year since the last inspection in 2013.
- The vast majority of pupils say that they enjoy school and talk proudly about what they have achieved.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are respectful, considerate and responsible and feel safe. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased. They particularly like the inclusive values of the school.
- The curriculum is rich and engaging. Pupils are very positive about the special events they experience at school.
- The governing body provides rigorous and robust challenge. It rightly holds the school accountable whilst demanding high standards. Governors know the school well and know when to balance challenge with support.
- The school has managed recent staffing changes well. Alterations in the staff structure, along with the appointment of the new special needs coordinator, ensure that the school is now well placed to maintain standards and improve further.
- Support from the local authority has been focused on improving teaching and learning and its actions have been effective.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance of pupils is improving but is not yet consistently good, with some groups of pupils attending less well than others.
- Opportunities to challenge pupils, including the most able, are sometimes missed.
- The outdoor learning environment for the early years foundation stage is insufficiently stimulating.
- The school's plan for improvement is insufficiently focused on the most important things.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the school's improvement planning by:
 - ensuring that it is focused on the most important actions that will make the most difference to the achievement of all pupils
 - removing other actions that will deflect the school from its main purpose
 - ensuring that the remaining actions can be effectively monitored and managed by the school.
- Develop the outdoor learning environment of the early years foundation stage to ensure that:
 - it is as vibrant and engaging as the indoor learning environment
 - it provides a range of stimuli for the children so that they can be fully engaged in their learning.
- Raise the level of challenge in lessons to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of ability, make the best possible progress.
- Leaders should reinforce their efforts to improve pupils' attendance so that all groups of pupils attend equally well.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Despite recent staffing and recruitment challenges, the headteacher has ensured that the school's teaching structure is now more able to meet the needs of the school. His drive to ensure a more shared leadership has resulted in improvements in both English and mathematics. The recent appointment of the new special needs coordinator is already having a noticeable impact.
- Staff and senior teachers respect the headteacher and they value his support and direction. Staff work very hard and in doing so they have created a shared determination to succeed.
- Parents are exceptionally positive about the school, the leadership of the school and the safe environment it provides for their children. Parents who completed the questionnaire indicated that they would recommend the school to others.
- Senior staff have worked together and taken appropriate actions to monitor lessons and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The literacy leader has been energetic in her actions to improve writing. She is aware that her focus should now be on reading.
- Leaders' work to improve mathematics is now very focused and having a positive impact. Pupils say how much they enjoy mathematics lessons and they make good progress.
- Under the direction of the early years leader, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development has been improving year on year and is now above the national figure. These improvements are set to continue.
- The school's leadership of safeguarding is very good. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection. Parents know how to raise any issues of concern and where to go to for advice and support. Pupils say they feel safe and rightly so. They say there is no bullying at the school, but that if there were, they would know what to do.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school to offer regular guidance and challenge. This arrangement has been rigorous and helpful in improving standards in teaching and learning.
- The school has made good use of its additional funding for its small number of disadvantaged pupils. The school provides both small-group and individual teaching. Assessment information provided by the school demonstrates that these pupils are performing in line with other pupils in the school.
- The leadership of the curriculum is good, ensuring that it is broad and engaging. The pupils speak enthusiastically about the enriching opportunities that they are offered. Of the two inspection days, one day was a themed 'Chocolate Day'. The second day was World Book Day, with all pupils and staff dressed as book characters. By planning interesting curriculum activities such as these, the school is enhancing pupils' learning.
- Leaders effectively promote the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of the pupils. Pupils learn that everyone should be included and not discriminated against. Pupils like the fact that at their school their teachers say that, 'Everybody is different, but everybody is equal'. Pupils learn about British values through such things as displays and involvement in democratically electing members to the pupil council. Parents' talks at assembly about their careers help pupils to develop their understanding of life beyond school.
- The headteacher and governors have managed teachers' performance effectively. Staff feel valued, and actions to improve teachers' knowledge are now more focused. As a result, teachers are carrying out their roles more effectively.
- The school has made good use of its primary physical education and sports funding, using the fund to increase the number and variety of sports offered by the school. These actions have ensured that more pupils are involved in a wider range of sports and competitions.
- The school's improvement plan is not sharply focused. It contains many actions rather than just those of most importance for bringing about further improvement. As a result, leaders are at times distracted by less important matters. When evaluating the effectiveness of the plan, leaders' ability to gain a deep insight of the impact their work is hindered by the number of actions they have to review.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is highly effective and has played a significant role in moving the school forward.
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is extremely committed and knowledgeable and provides strong leadership.
 - The governing body, the headteacher and senior leaders work together well. Governors challenge and support the school intelligently and are clear that the school should be the best that it can be.

- Governors carry out their responsibilities regarding safeguarding and health and safety effectively and they have a range of skills and experiences in order to hold the school to account.
- Governors are kept well informed. Events such as special monitoring days help them experience the school in action.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All statutory requirements are met and school staff are vigilant about keeping pupils safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- As a result of regular monitoring and feedback, teaching has improved and is now good throughout the school. The improved quality of teaching is having a positive impact on the quality of learning.
- Teachers know the school's assessment system and use it to ensure a close eye is kept on how pupils are progressing.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics are very closely assessed. This has enabled the teachers and the English and mathematics subject leaders to have the information they need to ensure that teaching builds well on pupils' prior learning.
- New developments in the teaching of reading are having a very positive impact in the classroom and especially so in the early years and Key Stage 1. This work has been given a high priority by the school. Teaching of reading is increasingly effective but not yet as strong as in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers are enthusiastic in their role and pupils say that they make learning fun.
- Teachers plan their lessons well and are able to reflect on how effective their teaching is and how it contributes to improving pupils' learning.
- Typically, teachers' planned activities are interesting and the lessons challenging. Pupils are excited by the learning and make good progress. However, at times pupils don't engage quite so well in their learning or make such strong progress because the level of challenge is not quite as high.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and they are also skilful at questioning and using the responses from the pupils to help share the learning in lessons.
- In lessons, there is a good dialogue between the pupils and teachers about pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly and regularly and help them improve.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability are well supported by an effective team of teaching assistants. The teaching assistants know these pupils and their learning needs very well and are guided effectively by the teachers in supporting pupils in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare continues to be good.
- The school is aware that attendance for all groups of pupils is not yet consistently good and has taken suitable actions to tackle this. Recent results show that overall pupil attendance is improving and is likely to be in line with the national average at the end of this academic year.
- Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes to school; they value their learning and are keen to succeed.
- The positive and inclusive values of the school are such that they encourage pupils to respect differences.
- Pupils feel safe and secure at school. Parents are very positive about this part of the school's work, believing the school to be a safe place for their children to learn and that they are well looked after and happy.
- Pupils are polite; they listen carefully to each other in lessons. They work well together in lessons.
- Pupils look forward to playtime and lunchtime, saying it is a happy and enjoyable time. This was evident during the inspection.
- Pupils understand the importance of keeping safe and this includes internet safety. The school has promoted this well during special internet safety events in the school.
- Pupils say that if they have a problem they can go to a teacher or member of staff and they will help them. Pupils know how to speak up if they have a concern.
- The school council has a real voice, and it recognises the importance of its role. The value it places on its contribution to the school is very clear. The school council has raised funds for several charitable causes, including supporting disadvantaged children living in a developing country.

- The children understand the importance of their role within their village community. The school has helped promote this through its special in-school communities, such as their class communities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils say that behaviour is good and that any poor behaviour is dealt with well, quickly and fairly, and parents agree.
- The school has a calm and purposeful atmosphere and pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming.
- In lessons, pupils are attentive and behave very well indeed. Teachers are skilled at intervening early should, on rare occasions, a pupil needed support in staying on task. No low-level disruption was observed during this inspection.
- Behaviour in the Reception class is good, with the children's learning enhanced by their curiosity and willingness to participate. These positive approaches to learning are consistent throughout the school, with the Year 6 pupils, nearing the end of their time at the school, showing mature behaviour and secure learning habits that will help ensure they are well prepared for secondary school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Pupils currently in the school make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics screening, which checks how well pupils use their understanding of the sounds that letters make, demonstrate an improving trend since the last inspection. Results are now above the national average.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics has improved year on year. The results in 2015 were higher than the national level in reading and mathematics and much higher in writing.
- Results at Key Stage 2 have also risen overall since the previous inspection, with improvement in mathematics being especially strong. The improvement in reading has not been as strong as in writing or mathematics. Rightly, leaders continue to prioritise reading as an area for development.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability receive well-targeted support in lessons and in small groups and are making good progress. Disadvantaged pupils also benefit from such support, and they make good progress and achieve as well as the other pupils in the school.
- Work in pupils' books demonstrates their improved effort and achievement in writing for different purposes and for different subjects.
- Pupils enjoy reading, and special events such as World Book Day have been used effectively by the school to promote reading. The school is using a variety of approaches to improve reading further throughout the school. Older readers read confidently, fluently and with expression. They enjoy talking about their reading books, why they chose them and why they like them. Home-school records ensure that parents are included in the teaching and enjoyment of reading. Each pupil has a target for improvement in his or her reading.
- Pupils study a wide range of topics and progress over time is good. However, the most-able pupils are not consistently given work with a level of challenge that would enable them to make really strong progress. Sometimes the presentation of work is not as good as it should and could be.
- The school's own progress information for the pupils currently in the school demonstrates that they are making good progress, and the improved outcomes from the last two years at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are set to continue.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enjoy a good start to their schooling in the Reception class. They are well looked after and kept safe and secure.
- The early years provision is led and managed very well. The leader demonstrates clarity of direction and passion for this stage in the children's learning.
- Teaching is good. The children engage well in the planned activities, play together well, take turns and share. They also help each other; for example, during the inspection, a child was observed helping another child put on headphones.

- In a lesson on 'The Little Red Hen', the children were engaged in role-play and related games and language activities. This effective planning, linking traditional tales and acting them out, is contributing to the improving outcomes in language development.
- The outside play area provided for the early years is underdeveloped as a learning space. It is not as well organised or as inviting as the indoor learning areas and therefore the children are less likely to use the outdoor area to further develop and learn.
- There is good support from the teaching assistants and the school is making good use of its additional funding to ensure that disadvantaged children make good progress and achieve as well as other children.
- There is a good focus on phonics and this helps prepare the children for success in the basic skills in reading and is also contributing to the improved outcomes in the phonics screening in Year 1.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has seen a year-on-year improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining a good level of development and it was above the national figure last year. The school predicts continuing improvement for this year.
- Leaders are working well to involve parents more in their children's learning, encouraging parents to look at records of their children's learning in their learning journals and to add their own contributions.

School details

Unique reference number	118274
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002345

This inspection 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	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Grice
Headteacher	Leslie Hawkins
Telephone number	01959 532224
Website	www.halstead.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@halstead.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 December 2013

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a range of different ethnic heritages including Traveller, Black Caribbean and Indian.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The school meets the government’s floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in eight lessons. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector heard pupils read, met with a small group of pupils and spoke with pupils at playtime and lunchbreak.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, governors, carers and parents and pupils.
- A range of school documentation was studied, including information about pupils' progress and attainment, the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation report, safeguarding documents and records, attendance and behaviour records, and policies and records of the monitoring of teaching.
- The inspector took account of the 20 responses to the online survey, Parent View.
- Questionnaires from six members of staff were analysed.
- The inspector also examined school policies, the school website, teachers' plans, pupils' work and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Kevin Parfoot, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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