

# Hempstead Infant School

Hempstead Road, Hempstead, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3QG

## Inspection dates

23–24 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The school is improving, but not yet sufficiently to be good.
- Teaching in Years 1 and 2 requires further improvement. Staff do not consistently expect enough of the pupils.
- Staff do not use information about how well pupils are doing to provide hard enough tasks for them.
- The school does not know precisely enough how well all pupils are doing in English and mathematics.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not make fast enough progress in English and mathematics, despite very significant amounts of teaching time being given to these subjects, especially to literacy.
- Pupils do not learn enough in the subjects beyond English and mathematics. These subjects are not consistently well taught.
- The school evaluates itself too highly. Leaders are not ambitious enough for the pupils. Because there is some improvement, senior leaders have trusted and hoped that the school is good.
- School management systems are not strong enough to improve the school quickly. The school improvement plan is not sharp or demanding enough.
- Staff performance management has insufficient impact on improving teaching and provision.
- Middle leadership of subjects and year groups is insufficiently effective. Thus, pupils are not challenged enough in all aspects of their learning.

### The school has the following strengths

- Teaching engages and enthuses pupils. Pupils enjoy school. They are very happy and feel secure. Staff care for them really well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They work and play joyfully and kindly together.
- The school safeguards its pupils well.
- Children make a very positive start in the Reception classes, in which the provision and teaching are good.
- Parents are pleased with the school, especially the happiness and well-being of the pupils.
- The work of the governing body is improving. Governors are increasingly challenging the senior staff.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
  - being more ambitious for what pupils can achieve in Years 1 and 2
  - evaluating the school more robustly and using these evaluations to plan more rapid improvements
  - improving the leadership of all subjects and of key stage 1
  - improving the effectiveness of performance management for teachers and introducing performance management for teaching assistants.
- Ensure that teachers assess pupils accurately and use these assessments to provide challenging work for the pupils that takes their learning forward more quickly.
- Improve the curriculum by:
  - making all subjects in the curriculum more thought-provoking and demanding for pupils
  - articulating more clearly what the curriculum is intended to achieve for the pupils in this school
  - ensuring that all subjects have sufficient teaching time and that literacy is taught more efficiently.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has taken on board the recommendations of the last inspection. She has procured some useful advice and sharpened up aspects of the school's work. The school is improving but not enough to have become a good school.
- Senior leaders do not promote sufficient ambition for the pupils' learning. The school is generally satisfied with results in English and mathematics that are sound but could be better, given the pupils' abilities and prior learning.
- The school is satisfied too that pupils have some enjoyable lessons in the other subjects, beyond English and mathematics, without ensuring that enough is expected of pupils in these subjects.
- Staff like working at the school. They are mutually supportive and highly committed to the pupils. However, the school's management systems are not tight or efficient enough for all their hard work to have full effect. For instance, the school improvement plan is not focused sharply enough in the right areas. It lacks precise enough measures of success, so that staff are not clear enough what they are aiming for next.
- The school evaluates itself honestly but without sufficient rigour. It believes things are better than they are.
- Teachers have leadership roles, either as a member of a subject team or as a year leader. They work hard in these positions. However, their work is not as effective as it should be. The organisation of the subject teams usefully promotes cooperation among staff but it lacks thoroughness and accountability. Staff do not know well enough how well pupils do in each subject, often relying on anecdotal evidence which is not robust.
- Leaders show a strong belief in some tried and trusted approaches, without thinking sharply or critically enough about how these might be improved or considering whether more is possible.
- In literacy, for example, there is quite time-consuming and inefficient use of some teaching methods, including those for handwriting practice and guided reading. The school spends a great deal of time on literacy teaching across all classes, without the very high level of outcomes that this should lead to.
- In turn, this inefficiency reduces the time available to other curriculum subjects, notably science, the humanities and the arts. These subjects are not taught with enough depth and rigour.
- A reasonable time allocation is given to physical education, although not all the teaching is as good as it should be. To address this, the school spends its sport premium funding appropriately. Many pupils enjoy a wide range of physical activities, inside and outside of school hours. A new before-school running club is popular.
- The school has a range of user-friendly, easy-to-read policies which are available to parents online. However, at the time of the inspection, not all the required information was on the school's website. Some documents were out of date. The information about the curriculum for parents was bland and unspecific to the school. The school does not say what is special about its own curriculum.
- The performance management of teachers is arranged in appropriate timescales. However, it has not been successful enough in raising expectations of what pupils can achieve in key stage 1. The targets for staff are not sharp enough. There is no official performance management for teaching assistants, meaning that these staff are not accountable or formally supported in achieving what they need to.
- Nevertheless, senior leaders take useful and sometimes firm action to bring about improvement in teaching. This has not yet gone far enough, but it has valuable impact.
- The headteacher's work has many strengths. She has made some necessary hard decisions. She also ensures that the school is a happy and encouraging place. It operates smoothly from day to day.
- The deputy headteacher carries out a number of roles and tasks effectively. She has recently successfully led the school's work in developing phonics teaching. This provides a model for leaders in other subjects.
- The special educational needs coordinator does some valuable work in planning provision for the pupils for whom she is responsible. She links well with outside agencies, where needed, and with parents, especially in the Reception classes.
- The school develops pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development suitably. Pupils are helped to understand aptly the diversity of life in modern Britain.
- Pupil premium funding is spent appropriately, following the review after the last inspection. The school is usefully developing the way that it evaluates the impact of its provision.

- Parents generally take a very positive view of the school. They attend the school's events and information session in good numbers. They are understandably pleased at how much their children enjoy being in school. They have noticed the improvements following the last inspection. Some parents have observed that aspects of school life are not as well managed as they could be, and are right in this.
- The local authority has carried out detailed work with the school which has been useful in some key respects. It has helped Hempstead make some constructive links with other schools. However, the local authority's reports overemphasise the improvements in the school. Its staff have gone along with the school's overgenerous self-evaluations. The local authority has not ensured that the school's systems and improvement plans are tight enough or ensured the school evaluates itself more accurately.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body has improved its work since the last inspection. The review following that inspection was usefully completed. The governing body is suitably organised. A new chair has taken over, who brings much enthusiasm and commitment to the role. Care is taken to recruit governors with the right skills. Governors undertake useful training and make valuable visits to the school. However, there is more to do for the governance of the school to be fully effective. Governors are rightly pleased that pupils enjoy the interesting activities in the school, but have not questioned very rigorously how deep and broad the learning is. They have not asked sufficiently deep questions about why key aspects of the school's leadership and management are not more effective.
  - Nevertheless, governors ask some challenging questions of the senior staff. They recognise that they can be more challenging still and need to follow up more sharply on some issues with senior leaders. Governors know the key issues and challenges faced by the school, but they tend to accept that things are going better than they actually are.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school sustains its record of checks on staff and other adults who work with children correctly. It works closely as needed with other agencies and with parents. Staff are properly and frequently trained; they know clearly what to do should they need to deal with a serious safeguarding matter. The school assesses risk properly. The school site is kept secure and safe, due to the conscientiousness of staff, including the attentive site manager. The safeguarding policy shown on the website at the time of the inspection was not the one actually in use, and it lacked detailed guidance to staff. The actual policy is fully up to date and appropriate.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because, in too many lessons and subjects, teachers do not expect enough of the pupils.
- The school accepts that the assessments staff make of pupils in English and mathematics are not always completely accurate. This means the school tends to believe pupils are doing better than they are. It also means that staff do not set challenging enough work for the pupils.
- The pupils who met with inspectors say that teachers are always kind. They also said, with good reason, that often the work they are set is too easy, and that it is sometimes too hard.
- A Year 2 mathematics lesson about fractions typified the teaching in this and other subjects. The teacher used humour and encouraged and motivated the pupils really well. They responded keenly and thoroughly enjoyed the imaginative activities. However, most pupils, including the most able, were completely ready for more challenging work. They said this to the teacher, asking her if they could think about more complex fractions, but the teacher stuck to her more basic plan and did not allow the pupils' learning to fly.
- Similarly, in a writing lesson, pupils wrote about the life cycle of the toad in the first person, using adjectives. They enjoyed this, but higher-attaining pupils in particular needed a harder task. With a group of lower-attaining pupils, a teaching assistant focused too much on rudiments of punctuation, rather than the main objective of writing in the first person. These pupils too were not challenged well enough.
- Too often, teachers' subject knowledge is insufficient to make lessons and units of work as challenging as they should be. Because subjects are not led well enough, clear expectations about high standards are not set across the school. If the teacher knows the subject matter she is teaching well, the teaching is more effective. If not, then the opposite is true and pupils can underachieve.
- In a science lesson, the teacher's apparent uncertainty stopped pupils from understanding the principles of fair testing well enough. In physical education, pupils' movements during a gymnastics lesson lacked precision because the teacher did not show that she knew what should be expected.

- The school has introduced a new system for improving pupils' writing. Staff have received appropriate training and this has helped bring some improvement to teaching and to pupils' writing. Leaders have not sufficiently checked how well this system has been introduced, so there are some inconsistencies and differing levels of success with it across the school.
- Reading and phonics are generally effectively taught. However, the school does not arrange its guided reading lessons consistently well. Some independent activities, where a member of staff is not directly supervising, lack challenge or are not clearly explained. Pupils' comprehension skills are not always carefully enough developed.
- Teachers enthuse pupils. They provide inventive and creative contexts and resources for the work, which pupils enjoy. Pupils like the number bonds badges because 'they let people know how clever I am'.
- At times, teaching assistants are deployed very effectively. For instance, in one lesson a teaching assistant helped pupils to decode the phonics skilfully. In some cases, teaching assistants challenged the thinking of higher-attaining pupils effectively.

## **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 show appropriate self-confidence. They are cheerful, friendly and very supportive of each other. They enjoy talking about their work and learning.
- The school actively promotes a strong moral code, which pupils understand and apply very well. They understand why some things are right or wrong and how they can consider the needs of others as well as themselves. They understand appropriately fundamental British values, such as respecting the need for rules and tolerance. Pupils make their own useful comments on how they develop these values.
- Pupils understand what is meant by bullying, including cyber bullying. They know what to do if they were subject to bullying. Nevertheless, they are clear that such behaviour is very rare indeed. They have absolute faith that the staff sort out any problems well. Most parents also agree this. Pupils are well looked after.
- Pupils are kept safe in the school. They feel very secure and happy. Their emotional well-being is strong. Where pupils have achieved something special or new for them, they enjoy being included in the 'galaxy of achievement', which is prominently displayed in the hall.
- There are many good ways in which pupils take responsibilities. For example, all Year 2 pupils have the chance to give 'helping hands' at playtimes, making sure that younger pupils have someone to play with and are content.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning. This has improved since the last inspection. Pupils work together well, sharing ideas thoughtfully. From the youngest ages, they develop good abilities in working independently and resourcefully.
- Pupils behave safely and well in the dining hall, playground and around the school. They know what to do if there is any problem.
- There have been no recent exclusions. There are no records of any significant misbehaviour and none was raised with inspectors. The school can show good evidence of its work to support pupils who may be at risk when this is needed. The school's work with outside agencies and parents in such circumstances is good and productive.
- In the assembly observed, pupils behaved well. Most pupils sang together, with accuracy, in a controlled and enjoyable way. A very few did not join in.
- Attendance is average. The school monitors this appropriately. No groups of pupils have low attendance. Pupils entitled to the pupil premium funding attend better than other groups.
- Occasionally, pupils misbehave slightly or stop paying attention in lessons. For example, in a guided reading session, pupils lost interest because there was not enough for them to do.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- Pupils attain to a fair standard by the end of Year 2 in English and mathematics. Results are generally at or above the national average. Given the pupils' starting points and abilities, however, these outcomes are not as strong as they could be. Pupils enter the school already with many valuable skills. They reach good standards at the end of the Reception Year and so more should be possible for them by the end of Year 2.
- In subjects beyond English and mathematics, the standards of pupils' work are very varied and not always as high as should be expected. Pupils who met with inspectors had little to say about these subjects. Too much depends on whether individual teachers have high expectations and sufficient personal expertise in any particular subject or not. So, in art in one class, pupils mixed colours very effectively, because the teacher was clear about what to do. In a science lesson, however, pupils were asked to label the parts of a plant. They knew this already; the teacher appeared unsure how best to take the lesson further and their learning progressed slowly.
- Generally, boys do not achieve quite as well as girls across the school. Staff and governors are aware of this and have planned activities to be more attractive to some boys. There remains more to do in this regard.
- In mathematics, pupils are able to investigate interesting ideas like 'all multiples of 3 are odd'. Pupils use a wide range of problem-solving strategies usefully in mathematics. This is less so, however, for lower-attaining pupils.
- In 2015, about an average proportion of Year 1 pupils reached the expected standard in the national phonics screening. This represents a clear improvement over the last two years. Pupils' understanding of phonics shows some further improvement this year.
- Pupils generally read and write at a decent standard. Their writing shows interest and fitness for the purpose. Spelling, punctuation and grammar rules are applied appropriately. Pupils draft their work usefully. The pupils who read to inspectors did so fluently and with fair comprehension. Year 1 pupils applied phonics rules, linking letters and sounds, to work out quite complex words like 'scrambling' and 'watered' correctly. They enjoyed discussing their books.
- The school has tended to believe that these reasonable standards are good enough. But pupils make too little progress from their starting points. The school does not have a sharp enough view of how well pupils are progressing.
- The school has very few disadvantaged pupils, entitled to the support of pupil premium, on its roll. The achievement of these pupils is mixed but is, overall, not a specific cause for concern. The pupils do as well as the others. Their progress needs to rise along with that of their classmates.
- Pupils who have special educational need or disability also achieve as well as other pupils in the school. The school does not, however, check on this as robustly as it could.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported appropriately and make suitable progress in learning English where needed. They also fare as well as other pupils.
- Pupils move on to junior school with the social and learning skills, and sufficient proficiency in literacy and numeracy, to be successful. However, they do not take with them all of the advantages and deeper learning that a completely rounded infant education could give.

## Early years provision

## is good

- Consistently, more children than the average reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year. They achieve highly in all parts of the curriculum and are well prepared for Year 1.
- The early years leader is successful in pulling her team together into a coherent unit. Staff work fruitfully together and are well led in their day-to-day work. In each of the three classes, pupils enjoy similar, carefully planned, positive learning experiences. The staff have high expectations and are lovely with the children.
- Phonics teaching is well organised across the Reception classes. In groups, children effectively learn the letter sounds and combinations and then quickly use them in writing or reading. Children engage actively with, and enjoy, these challenging sessions. More generally, reading is well promoted in Reception.
- Children's emerging writing is developed well. Many children use capital letters and finger spaces correctly. In a lesson where pupils wrote a letter to a dragon, the teacher very skilfully balanced showing

the pupils what to do, while letting them have a good go for themselves. All children, including higher attainers, were challenged to improve their writing by using better vocabulary and thinking about tricky spellings.

- The classrooms and outdoor areas are very attractive and full of interest. The carefully considered resources are well organised and readily accessible to the children.
- Children enjoy and benefit much from sessions where they make their own choices. These sessions, across all the three classes, are well planned and organised by staff. Inspectors observed pupils concentrating well on activities involving finding dinosaurs, counting, role play, making a camp, observing nature, hunting for minibeasts and building train lines, to name just a few. Staff asked good questions and set helpful challenges to get pupils thinking and producing, such as, 'Can you make a track to the storybook?'
- Through such activities, the children develop good skills for learning, including perseverance, checking their own work, interacting positively and negotiating with others. They are keen to explain what they are learning and show high levels of respect for each other and for adults.
- Pupil premium funding is appropriately spent for the small number of children concerned. They achieve well.
- Staff assess children carefully. These assessments are used well in planning the learning activities and children's next learning steps. There is, however, scope for some further sharpening of this work. At times, some activities could be even more tightly planned to meet children's specific needs more closely still. The impact of new approaches and initiatives in the early years classes could also be evaluated more tightly.
- Staff take good care of the children and safeguard them well. They supervise them carefully, while allowing them the necessary freedom to thrive in their tasks. The early years area, indoors and outdoors, is kept safe and secure. At the end of the day, staff are meticulous in ensuring all children are safely returned to their parents and carers.
- The school works well with parents and also with pre-schools and other external agencies. This helps to provide support for children when needed, with positive impacts on improving their outcomes. One parent spoke for many in saying that their Reception child 'is so happy there and can't wait to go in each morning. He has learned so much and the teaching staff have done a fantastic job. The communication is excellent.'

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118555
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10009213

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	270
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lisa Lewis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Dadd
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 365969
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hempsteadinfantschool.co.uk">www.hempsteadinfantschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@hempsteadinf.medway.sch.uk">office@hempsteadinf.medway.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6–7 March 2014

## Information about this school

- This is a three-form entry infant school, with classes in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. It is slightly larger than the average primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. There are small numbers of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds.
- A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is low.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and entitled to the support of pupil premium funding, is very low.
- Some pupils attend nearby before- and after-school clubs. These are not managed by the school and are inspected separately.
- The school now meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, in a range of subjects. Some observations were made jointly with senior leaders. They also evaluated samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors spoke with the headteacher, staff, governors, parents, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed around the school, during playtimes and lunchtimes, as well as during an assembly.
- They evaluated key school documents, including minutes of meetings, plans, self-evaluations and records of the pupils' academic progress.
- Inspectors took careful note of the opinions of parents given on the 98 returns to the Parent View questionnaire on the Ofsted website.

## Inspection team

Robin Hammerton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matt Batchelor	Ofsted Inspector
Judith Askey-Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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