

# Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School

Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 4LG

## Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership for the school. She is supported very well by the deputy headteacher.
- Senior leaders, together with all staff and governors, share a commitment to ensure that pupils develop as well-rounded individuals who have good attitudes to learning and achieve well.
- Leaders have demonstrated that there is a strong capacity for continued improvement.
- All groups of pupils learn well and make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of interesting and exciting learning opportunities.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. The headteacher ensures that the school is a learning community for pupils and staff. Staff are encouraged and supported to increase and enrich their skills and practice, to provide the best for their pupils.
- The successful strategies to broaden pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are not always used consistently in all classes.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful of each other and adults.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground. They feel safe and happy at school and are well looked after.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength and underpins all aspects of school life.
- Senior leaders and governors make rigorous and effective checks on all aspects of the school's performance. They have a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and where improvements are needed.
- Governors support and challenge leaders effectively and hold them to account for pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders have correctly identified that the most able pupils, in particular, do not always reach the high standards that they are capable of in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children get a good start to school in the Reception Year. They settle in well and make rapid progress from their starting points, which prepares them well to continue their learning in Year 1. There is scope to increase the range of opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's learning. Leaders could also liaise more closely with the children's pre-school settings to support transition into the school.

## Full report

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

- Provide greater challenge for the most able pupils, ensuring that more work at a higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Ensure that the successful strategies that help to broaden pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are used consistently in all classes.
- Increase the opportunities for parents to contribute to children's learning in the Reception Year. Ensure that leaders liaise more closely with the increased number of pre-school settings.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher provides highly effective leadership for the school. She is unwavering in her determination to provide the best learning experiences for the pupils and staff, and has high expectations of all. She is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher and has the confidence of parents, staff and governors.
- Staff and governors share the headteacher's ambition for continued improvement. The headteacher sets great store in developing the skills and capacity of other leaders and all staff in the school. She has created a strong, close-knit team of staff who are proud to work at the school and appreciate the opportunities to further their skills and expertise. Staff morale is high. One member of staff expressed the views of many with the comment: 'The school is a very supportive place to work, where you feel valued as a member of the team.'
- Effective and incisive monitoring provides senior leaders with accurate information. Appropriate support is provided if any weaknesses are identified, and improvement is expected. All staff know that they are accountable for pupils' progress.
- There is a rigorous process for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Leaders know precisely how well each pupil is doing, which enables them to identify any individuals who are falling behind so that extra help can be given.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and planned well around interesting topics and themes. These capture the interest of pupils. The curriculum is enriched through visits and visitors to school that provide pupils with memorable and meaningful learning experiences.
- A good range of clubs helps pupils to learn new skills as well as making a significant contribution to their personal, as well as their academic, achievements. One parent wrote: 'I have been impressed by the range of activities that are open to children.'
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all that the school does. Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because all staff promote and demonstrate fundamental British values in all areas, across the school. Respect and tolerance are fostered very effectively through the school's values and the subjects taught. One parent commented: 'My son has made wonderful progress, loves school and has developed a good sense of how to treat others, and what is fair and right, through his learning here.'
- Equal opportunities are promoted well and all groups of pupils learn without fear of discrimination of any type.
- Leaders make good use of the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium to effectively extend the existing strong provision. Working with specialist sport coaches enhances the skills of pupils and teachers and therefore improves outcomes for pupils. The school's work in this area has been acknowledged through the achievement of the gold sports mark award for the last two years.
- Leaders work effectively to improve the achievement of the relatively small number of disadvantaged pupils. The additional funding is used well to provide extra support as

appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Senior leaders carefully check any differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most-able and other pupils nationally. Effective action is taken to enable this group of pupils to achieve as well as others.

- Parents are very positive about the school. They expressed every confidence in the leadership. One parent wrote: 'The headteacher is outstanding and runs the school professionally, and with high standards, which I feel are well maintained.'
- The local authority also expresses confidence in the leadership of the school and works productively with leaders and staff to ensure continuing improvement.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors are committed to the school and share the ambition and aspirations of the headteacher. They work closely with the headteacher to ensure the school's ongoing improvement and pursuit of excellence.
- Governors know the school well. They provide a good balance of challenge and support to leaders. They are well informed by the headteacher and through their own monitoring work, to enable them to do this. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the key priorities for further development.
- The governing body regularly checks that its members have the skills to effectively hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work. The school benefits from governors' appropriate range of expertise and experience. As with the rest of the school's community, governors are reflective and are always looking to see how they might improve their effectiveness.
- Governors question the achievement of different groups of pupils and how well this compares to national figures. They check that additional funding is used effectively to determine that it is making a difference for pupils. They are clear about their role in the performance management of teachers, and the relationship between teachers' performance and pay.
- Governors ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met, including those relating to safeguarding.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' safety and well-being are paramount and there is a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Pupils feel very safe and secure and all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school keeps their children safe. One parent wrote: 'I feel Herstmonceux Primary School goes above and beyond to ensure my child's safety, well-being and happiness.'
- In addition to the headteacher, who is the main designated safeguarding leader, the deputy headteacher and the inclusion manager are also trained in this role. This

ensures that there is always a highly effective, trained safeguarding lead available to staff, should they have a concern.

- All staff receive regular and appropriate training about safeguarding and know that they are all responsible for pupils' welfare and safety. They are very clear about what to do if they have any concerns and are vigilant in doing so. Pupils are provided with immediate and appropriate support when necessary.
- Leaders ensure that the safeguarding systems and processes are rigorous and fit for purpose, including risk assessments. All statutory checks on adults are made and recorded carefully on a single central register. Records are detailed and of high quality, and, where necessary, there are effective links with parents and outside agencies.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers generally have high expectations for pupils and are dedicated, and committed to striving to provide the best for their pupils. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good. Teachers encourage pupils to do their best and pupils want to do well and work hard.
- There is a very strong learning culture in the school for staff and pupils. Teachers promote a positive 'can do' ethos, which helps pupils develop resilience and make good progress. Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them. Pupils also develop as reflective and questioning learners.
- Teachers are encouraged and expected to keep up to date with the latest educational research. They carry out their own research projects in school and in doing so increase their own knowledge, skills and ability to provide the best for their pupils. One member of staff expressed the views of many with the comment: 'I have rediscovered my enthusiasm for learning and developing my practice.'
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together, with teaching assistants being fully included in the learning culture of the school. They make a good contribution to pupils' learning, especially when they support small groups or individual pupils.
- Reading is taught well. Reading for enjoyment is promoted very effectively across the school. Teachers select appropriate and often challenging texts that inspire pupils. One pupil described how reading the class text helped her work on 'understanding characters, emotions and feelings and putting yourself into someone else's shoes'. Phonics (letters and the sounds that they represent) skills are taught well and help pupils get off to a good start in reading.
- Writing in pupils' books for different subjects is often of high quality and reflects pupils' understanding of the features of different writing genres. Pupils' exposure to high-quality texts has a very beneficial impact on the quality of their writing.
- The school has recently started a new approach to teaching mathematics as a result of the research work of the mathematics leader. This approach ensures a greater focus on reasoning skills and mastery of mathematical concepts, as well as developing and using accurate mathematical vocabulary. Further training is planned to ensure that all staff are fully confident and secure in the approach. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement in the classes where it has been implemented.

- Within the overall good quality of teaching and learning, there are times when the very successful strategies used to broaden the skills, knowledge and understanding of pupils of all abilities, are not consistently evident across all classes. As a result, pupils sometimes do not learn as well as they might. In addition, there are occasions when the demands made on the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenging to enable them to achieve at a greater depth.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils thrive in a happy, caring environment. Staff know all the pupils well and as a consequence, individuals' personal, social, emotional and behavioural needs are supported very effectively.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils and provide good role models. Pupils care about their school, their teachers and each other. All pupils who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agreed that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds, and to treat everyone equally.
- The school has a calm, harmonious atmosphere. Pupils feel safe in school. They said that any bullying was very rare. They are confident to turn to staff should any problems arise and know that they will be listened to. Pupils understand that bullying can take different forms, including online bullying, and spoke knowledgeably about how to keep safe on the internet.
- Pupils enjoy their responsibilities and take them seriously. Play leaders and peer mediators, for example, explained in detail how they make a difference in the school.
- All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their children feel safe at school and are well looked after. Many also commented on how well the older and younger pupils learn and play together. One parent wrote: 'The caring, family atmosphere is apparent with play leaders and mixed year groups at lunchtime, so that older ones help the younger ones.'
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club receive a safe and sociable start to the school day.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are confident, friendly and polite and get on well together. They are welcoming to visitors and it was a delight to hear their cheery 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' during the inspection.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons, around the school and at breaktimes, including wet playtimes, and lunchtimes.
- Pupils learn self-discipline but very occasionally a few need reminders from adults in order to behave well. Staff use the school's agreed behaviour management system

consistently and pupils respond well to this. Pupils agree that pupils behave well most of the time but said that on some occasions in lessons a few do not behave as expected. They said that teachers deal with this well, and it does not stop them learning. During the inspection there were only a very few occasions when pupils became distracted and lost their focus on learning. This was where they were not fully engaged or motivated by the learning activities.

- Leaders do all they can to promote good attendance. Almost all pupils attend school regularly and attendance is around the national average. The figure is skewed by a very small number of pupils who are persistently absent for a range of reasons.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' work in their books and the school's information about progress show that pupils achieve well. This is seen in a range of subjects, including art, music and physical education, as well as in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At the end of Year 2 and Year 6, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standards for their age is above that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2016, pupils' progress was particularly strong in mathematics and as a result, a greater proportion of pupils reached a higher standard in their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills from their starting points.
- Progress between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 in 2016 was not significantly different from that found nationally in reading and writing.
- The school's information on pupils currently in the school shows that pupils are making good progress from their starting points, with most on track to reach at least the expected attainment for their age by the end of the year.
- Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are achieving increasingly well and often make rapid gains in their learning. This is as a result of good support from teachers and teaching assistants to reduce any barriers to learning. They use a range of successful strategies to make sure that this group of pupils achieve as well as possible.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good gains from their starting points. This is because their needs are accurately identified and the appropriate support is provided for them to help them overcome any difficulties.
- Phonics skills are taught effectively and systematically. This has resulted in an above-average proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, over the last three years. Pupils use their phonics skills well to help them read and write.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They develop a range of strategies to help them read with confidence and fluency. They develop good comprehension skills. Year 6 pupils can discuss characters and settings, often within challenging texts, using empathy and an increasing understanding of how authors grab the attention of readers. They can express personal preferences for different styles of writing and different authors.
- Pupils now have more opportunities to write across a range of subjects, which was an area to improve from the previous inspection report. This is helping them to write

skillfully in a range of styles for different purposes.

- The most able pupils currently in the school, including those who are disadvantaged, are generally challenged to achieve well. Leaders have correctly identified, however, that challenges could be greater and expectations higher, to ensure that this group consistently achieve a higher standard in their learning.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are generally typical for their age. However, an increasing proportion are starting with skills below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language skills. Children, including those who are disadvantaged, make good progress in the Reception Year and are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- Over the past three years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been above that found nationally.
- The leadership of the early years is effective because the leader is skilled and experienced and has a secure knowledge of children's early development. The specific needs of all children are identified quickly and met well. The teaching assistant, for example, has been trained in speech and language development as it was identified as a key area to improve for the children currently in early years.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. There is a successful focus on children's early reading and writing skills, including phonics skills, as well as providing engaging activities tailored to children's interests across all areas of learning.
- Children quickly develop a love of learning, confidence and independence. The outdoor learning areas are particularly stimulating and develop children's imaginations and enquiring minds. One parent commented: 'The early years staff make learning so much fun for my Reception-age child, and he has already developed an enthusiastic attitude to learning because of this.'
- Children behave well and settle quickly into the school's routines. They are very effectively supported in developing a 'can do' attitude to learning. They sustain their concentration well on specific activities, demonstrate persistence in learning and make choices and decisions about how to approach tasks.
- The early years leader ensures that all the safeguarding and welfare requirements appropriate to this age group are met. All the necessary actions are taken to support any children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, and to reduce any barriers to learning. Staff ensure that children are kept safe and children learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Children knew, for example, that they must wash their hands after playing in the mud kitchen.
- Parents are positive about their children's start in school. One parent wrote: 'Every day he's up and dressed as quick as he can, asking to go to school.' There are procedures to get to know children and their families before they start so that they have a smooth transition into school. There is scope, however, to initiate greater involvement from parents in their children's learning and development. There would also be benefits in forging increased links with the range of different settings that children attend before



they start at the school.

## School details

Unique reference number	114506
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10033042

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Bye
Headteacher	Catherine Cottingham
Telephone number	01323 833148
Website	<a href="http://www.herstmonceux.e-sussex.sch.uk">www.herstmonceux.e-sussex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@herstmonceux.e-sussex.sch.uk">head@herstmonceux.e-sussex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2012

## Information about this school

- Herstmonceux is smaller than the average-sized primary school and pupils are taught in single-age classes.
- There is provision for the early years in the Reception class, which children attend full time.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is below average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes. Most observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and looked at work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school. They also talked to pupils about reading, and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other staff with key leadership responsibilities and governors. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a local authority adviser.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including: the school's own checks on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at the 36 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 22 written responses, and spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of 16 responses to the questionnaire for staff and 39 responses to the pupils' survey.

## Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Jenner	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Tait	Ofsted Inspector

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