

Hernhill Church of England Primary School

Fostall, Hernhill, Faversham, Kent ME13 9JG

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher's ambitious vision of a well-rounded education, underpinned by Christian values, has caught the imagination of the whole community. There is a genuine sense of joy in learning at this school.
- Pupils' outcomes in reading, writing, mathematics, science and a range of subjects are exceptionally strong because of excellent teaching and an exciting, broad and balanced curriculum.
- Teachers plan challenging activities that bring out the best in their pupils. Pupils try their hardest at all times and take immense pride in their work.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and skilful questioning to deepen and extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make very strong progress as a result of the carefully tailored support they receive.
- Teachers provide high levels of challenge to the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, the most able pupils do exceptionally well in all subjects and all year groups.
- Pupils behave impeccably in lessons and around the school. They are considerate to each other in the playground, and play together splendidly.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare, and that if it does occur teachers deal with it promptly and well.
- Pupils love coming to school. They rarely miss a day and rates of attendance are above national averages for primary schools.
- Leaders make outstanding provision for pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils seize with relish the many opportunities to develop leadership.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are open-minded, tolerant, and have a strong understanding of British values.
- Governors provide highly effective oversight of all areas of the school's work. They know the school extremely well and are ambitious for all pupils.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress overall. However, leaders are keenly aware that outcomes for the most able children remain below national averages. Leaders are taking effective action to address this.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all groups of children in Reception, in particular the most able, achieve outcomes that are above national averages.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Since her appointment in September 2016, the headteacher has completely transformed the culture of this school. Her ambitious vision for an exciting and varied curriculum, underpinned by clearly stated Christian values, has won the support and confidence of the whole community.
- Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and all those who spoke or wrote to inspectors, were highly complimentary about the school. Parents value the warm and welcoming atmosphere, the commitment of teachers and the many enrichment opportunities that their children have. Parents reserve particular praise for the impact the headteacher has had since her arrival. One wrote, ‘a fantastic, lovely village school, with superb teaching staff and headteacher. My child loves going to school and is extremely happy there’.
- Leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. In particular, subject leaders now play a crucial role in developing the curriculum, supporting teachers, and ensuring that pupils achieve the best outcomes possible.
- Leaders ensure that teachers and other staff receive all the training and support they need to carry out their roles effectively. Teachers receive regular feedback on their performance, which they say has helped them to improve their teaching. They believe that they are held to account fairly for their pupils’ progress. As a result, staff morale is very high. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel that the headteacher values their efforts and that she has regard for their well-being. One teacher who responded to the online survey wrote, ‘Not a minute of our time is wasted.’
- A particular strength of the school is the innovative and flexible curriculum that leaders and teachers have worked together to put in place. Exciting topics, supported by challenging activities and well-designed resources, give pupils access to the full range of national curriculum subjects. Pupils say that they enjoy their learning, and this is evident in the very positive attitudes that they demonstrate and in the outstanding progress that they make.
- Leaders make exceptionally strong provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, during their time in the school all pupils learn three musical instruments. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of cultural experiences. After a theatre trip to see the play ‘War horse’, one Year 6 pupil wrote that it was ‘an emotional performance that made me cry with sadness and joy’. Pupils are encouraged to think of those less fortunate than themselves, for example by raising money to fund toilet blocks in schools in the developing world.
- The headteacher consulted with pupils, parents and staff when agreeing the school’s Christian values of compassion, forgiveness, resilience, respect and truthfulness. Pupils understand how these values relate to their lives in and out of school, and teachers make frequent reference to them in lessons. Leaders also ensure that pupils learn about British values, for example by holding elections for various pupil leadership roles. Pupils understand and respect the customs and beliefs of people from different cultures

and religions. Consequently, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

- Pupils benefit from a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities. Staff and parents have worked together to produce a 'curriculum pledge', which is a list of more than 30 experiences that all pupils should have by the time they leave school. Leaders make sure that pupils understand the importance of good physical and mental health, for example by introducing the 'daily mile' into the curriculum.
- Leaders have made particularly effective use of the sport premium to encourage participation in physical activity. Last year, nearly all pupils in Years 1 to 6 took part in a club, and many pupils have represented the school in competitive sport. Leaders work well with the local sports partnership to increase pupils' access to different sports, enabling pupils to win several individual and team awards.
- Leaders check that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used wisely to remove barriers to learning. As a result, these pupils make very strong progress across the school.
- Parents say that communication between home and school has improved significantly in the last year. One parent wrote, 'The headteacher has fully embraced including parents in her vision.' The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire say that they receive valuable information about their children's progress.
- Leaders are keenly aware that outcomes in the Reception class are not yet consistently outstanding and are taking effective action to improve outcomes, in particular for the most able children.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors have successfully addressed the recommendations on governance made at the previous inspection.
- Governors have a sharp understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. They study assessment information closely and hold leaders to account for pupils' progress. They check what leaders tell them by making carefully planned visits to monitor the school's progress against agreed priorities. They also take account of reports from local authority and diocesan advisers.
- Governors carry out all their statutory duties thoroughly, in particular in relation to safeguarding. They make regular checks on how well the school's child protection policies are being implemented. They also ensure that the school's arrangements for managing teachers' and leaders' performance are fair and rigorous. An effective committee structure ensures that governors scrutinise all areas of the school's work, with a particular focus on the impact of senior and subject leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes.
- Governors exercise careful oversight of the school's finances. They challenge leaders on the impact of the pupil and sport premiums. They also check that the additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities leads to improved outcomes for these pupils.
- Governors have rightly identified improving outcomes for the most able children in the

Reception class as a priority.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a warm, nurturing climate in which pupils flourish. Governors ensure that pupils' safety and well-being have a high priority. They check that all child protection policies and procedures are followed. Consequently, there is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children are carried out to a high standard. Staff benefit from regular training on all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty and child sexual exploitation. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They take the view that 'it could happen here' and know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil.
- Leaders are alert to the risks of online grooming or bullying. As a result, they have set up a 'digital leaders' team of older pupils who lead assemblies and visit classrooms to help other pupils stay safe online.
- The school's designated leaders for safeguarding have undertaken relevant, high-level training. They keep careful records of all child protection concerns. Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils who may be at risk of harm get timely help and support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have exceptionally high expectations of their pupils. Pupils rise magnificently to these expectations, working as hard as they can and behaving impeccably at all times. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and professional. As a result, pupils do extremely well in their learning.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to devise stimulating activities that capture pupils' imagination. Pupils relish the challenges that their teachers set for them, approaching their work with enthusiasm and tenacity. For example, pupils in Year 4 had to display considerable resilience when applying their recent learning in mathematics to a real-life task.
- Pupils are eager to learn from their mistakes. They welcome the incisive verbal and written feedback that their teachers give them. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and show their pupils what outstanding learning looks like. As a result, pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Learning in this school is characterised by detailed discussions between teachers and pupils. Teachers use questions exceptionally well to probe pupils' thinking. Pupils in all year groups are fluent and articulate speakers, able to express their ideas succinctly and clearly. Teachers insist on pupils using subject-specific language, and reinforce this, for example by addressing pupils as 'scientists' during a lesson on the human life cycle. Pupils are also encouraged to ask their own questions, for example at the start of each topic.

- Teachers exploit the opportunities provided by the new national curriculum to enable pupils to use and apply their learning in imaginative ways. For example, in a recent topic on the Great Fire of London, pupils used historical sources to find out about the fire. They then used their design technology and artistic skills to design fire engines and construct models of houses of the period. With the help of the local fire service, they then burned their models in the playground, learning about fire safety as they did so. This powerful experience enabled them to write vivid and moving diary entries from the point of view of a resident of one of those houses.
- Teachers rightly give a high priority to writing. Pupils write often, in a variety of styles and with increasing fluency and accuracy as they progress through the school. Pupils take great pride in their work. Books are well kept and handwriting is often immaculate.
- Pupils benefit from regular homework which helps to consolidate and extend their learning. At the start of a topic entitled 'Marvellous Me', pupils enjoyed decorating shoe boxes for homework and filling them with artefacts that represented their interests and personalities. Over 90% of parents agreed that their children receive appropriate homework for their age.
- The teaching of physical education (PE) is a strength of the school. Specialist coaches, funded by the sport premium, provide advice to teachers, leading to strong outcomes for pupils in PE and sport.
- Teachers are assiduous in challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity. For example, when discussing bullying Year 6 pupils used their understanding of the school's Christian values to consider the harmful impact of all forms of discrimination.
- Leaders recognise that although high-prior-attaining pupils achieve outcomes that are well above average in all subjects, there is scope for even greater levels of challenge for the most able pupils. Leaders are taking effective action to address this.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils benefit from an extremely wide range of opportunities to develop their leadership skills and contribute to the life of the school. Pupils can apply for or get elected to roles in the school council, the prefect team, the sports crew, the ethos team or the digital leaders group. Pupils carry out their duties diligently, helping to ensure the smooth running of the school, and providing reports to the headteacher and governing body.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their wider interests, through clubs and after-school activities. Leaders monitor attendance at lunchtime and after-school clubs to ensure that all pupils have the chance to participate.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school. They are unfailingly polite to each other and to their teachers. They are confident and outgoing, and are happy to engage visitors in conversation. They talk with confidence about what they have learned and

about what they need to do next to improve.

- Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures and religions. They have a sharp understanding of the school's Christian values. They are open and tolerant in their outlook on the world. As a result, they are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils are encouraged to look out for each other. For example, at lunchtime older pupils run playground activities for younger pupils.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They have an excellent understanding of how to use the internet safely. The digital leaders group lead assemblies and talk to pupils in classrooms about online safety.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and that if it does occur, teachers deal with it well. The school's own records confirm that there have been very few bullying incidents in the last year.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Their conduct in lessons and around the school is impeccable. They contribute willingly to class discussions and work studiously when required to. Pupils from all year groups mix together well in the playground and eat sensibly in the dining room.
- Pupils rarely miss a day of school. Overall attendance rates are consistently above national averages for primary schools. During 2015/16, a small number of disadvantaged pupils had rates of attendance that were much lower than those found nationally. However, leaders were rigorous in their response, so that by the end of 2016/17 disadvantaged pupils' attendance was close to the national average and no pupils were persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Provisional results for 2017 suggest that the school has built exceptionally well on the already strong outcomes achieved in 2016. Rates of progress for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 were well above national averages. The most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities also made progress that was in line with or above that found nationally. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the expected and higher standards was above national averages at both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Outcomes for the Year 1 and 2 phonics screening check show that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard or above has been at or higher than the national average for the last three years. Pupils currently in the school are also making rapid progress in phonics.
- Current pupils excel in their learning because of teachers' high expectations and the strong culture of scholarship that permeates the school. Teachers give a high priority to speaking, listening and writing. Pupils show resilience as they grapple with unfamiliar concepts. They are encouraged to speak, think and write like scientists, engineers, geographers or historians. As a result, the vast majority of pupils, including

disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able, are making outstanding progress across the curriculum.

- Pupils' workbooks show that in key stage 1 they gain a secure understanding of the foundations of reading, writing and mathematics. In key stage 2, pupils demonstrate the ability to tackle unfamiliar concepts, read challenging texts with understanding and write with fluency and sophistication. Pupils in the upper years of key stage 2 are currently making particularly strong progress in writing.
- The school vigorously promotes reading, and all pupils, including less confident readers, read willingly, often and with fluency. They use their phonics skills well. Sometimes teachers could be more proactive in helping pupils to select books with the appropriate level of challenge.
- Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps in education. By the time they leave the school, pupils have achieved above-average outcomes and have benefited from a rich and varied curriculum, underpinned by the school's Christian values. As a result, pupils develop the knowledge, skills and understanding, as well as the personal attributes, they need to succeed at secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- Outcomes for children in the Reception class are good rather than outstanding. In the three years up to 2016, there had been a declining trend in the number of children achieving a good level of development. This decline was arrested in 2017, when a higher proportion of children than that found nationally achieved a good level of development. However, leaders are aware that the proportion of children entering Year 1 with high levels of attainment remains consistently below the national average.
- Current children make good progress because the teaching meets their needs well. Children were completely engrossed in their superhero quest for healthy food because the teaching assistant leading them had fired their imaginations and provided strong support.
- Adults make effective use of questioning to support children's language development and help them to master new concepts. Children are encouraged to solve problems, with adults challenging them with questions such as 'How can we do this?'
- There is a strong focus on the development of early reading and writing. Children in the Reception class, who started school in September, are already beginning to write simple sentences and read simple words.
- Relationships between adults and children are warm and nurturing. Children trust the adults who work with them and feel safe in their care. Children's behaviour is excellent. They play together cooperatively and chat to adults and to each other in a friendly way at snack time and lunchtimes.
- The indoor and outdoor learning spaces are bright and stimulating. Displays provide strong support for reading and number work. Children look after their environment well, for example by helping to tidy up before lunchtime and at the end of the day.
- Arrangements for induction are effective. Parents say that their children settled in to

their new school quickly and well.

- Leaders have a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the Reception class. They track the progress of different groups of children carefully and make accurate assessments of their end-of year-outcomes. The majority of children are prepared well for Year 1. However, leaders are keenly aware that in previous years the most able children's achievement has been below national averages. In order to address this, leaders have placed a sharper focus on the progress of the most able children currently in the school. The most able children are now making more rapid progress.

School details

Unique reference number	118647
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10036838

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Figgis
Headteacher	Sarah Alexander
Telephone number	01227 751322
Website	www.hernhill.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@hernhill.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 February 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Hernhill is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below that found nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor targets which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as a short inspection of a good school and converted at the end of the day into a full section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed all classes, across all key stages, in many cases jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders and a group of teachers.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. He also spoke with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Canterbury.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their views about school and heard them read.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing 86 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, and 40 written responses. The lead inspector also spoke informally with parents at the start of the day. In addition, he met with one parent who asked to speak to him and took account of two hand-delivered letters.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff by analysing 24 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation including the school’s self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings and notes of external visits carried out by local authority officers.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils’ learning over time by examining a sample of their work books.
- Safeguarding procedures were also reviewed, including arrangements for keeping pupils safe in school and for recruiting staff.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Graham Chisnell	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Donovan	Ofsted Inspector

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