

Hempstead Infant School

Hempstead Road, Hempstead, Gillingham, Kent ME7 3QG

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2018

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| 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 | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and governing body have ensured that the school has improved since the previous inspection.
- Senior and middle leaders are a dedicated and cohesive team. Capacity for further improving the school is clear.
- Despite being relatively inexperienced in their roles, subject and year-group leaders have a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Pupils in key stage 1 make good progress from their different starting points because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do well at this school.
- The personal development and pastoral care of pupils are strengths of the school. Pupils say that they can rely on adults to help when they have problems.
- Safeguarding is effective. The culture to keep children safe is strong.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school.
- Pupils behave well. They like coming to school, show good attitudes to learning and are polite and welcoming to visitors.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Pupils enjoy being in their classrooms because teachers plan learning that engages and interests them.
- Outcomes for children at the end of early years are not good enough.
- Levels of challenge for most-able pupils are not as high as they could be.
- Despite the school's strengths, self-evaluation and improvement planning need to be better, so that they focus more keenly on the main priorities for improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the progress that children make in early years, so that a much higher proportion are well prepared for their move into Year 1 when it comes.
- Increase the levels of challenge offered to most-able pupils, so that their progress accelerates, and their attainment improves, especially in mathematics and English.
- Sharpen self-evaluation and school improvement planning, so that:
 - improvement planning more closely reflects leaders' self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses
 - staff are more keenly aware of their part in achieving the school's main priorities for improvement
 - leaders can accurately measure their progress in addressing the school's main priorities for improvement
 - those in positions of governance can better hold leaders to account for improving the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have ensured that the school has improved since the previous inspection. Areas of concern identified at that time have been addressed. Leaders are keenly aware that more now needs to be done to improve the school further.
- The headteacher is dedicated to the school. She has galvanised and motivated staff through challenging times in the recent past. Keeping the school open after a major flood and overseeing the subsequent refurbishment earlier this year are testament to her determination to provide the best possible education for the school's pupils.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced new systems to track pupils' progress and attainment and to manage the performance of staff. Expectations have risen. Leadership is more distributive. Middle leaders are having an increasingly positive impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- Additional funding to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is spent effectively. Consequently, pupils from these vulnerable groups achieve well. Parents are particularly positive about this aspect of the school's provision, including in early years.
- The school's curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Since the previous inspection, leaders have implemented many changes and are constantly reviewing curriculum content to ensure progression, breadth and balance. Leaders' insistence that staff 'Hempsteadise' different aspects of the curriculum ensures that pupils benefit from learning that is fun and relevant to them.
- Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain well, in a way that is commensurate with their age. They are aware of different faiths in the world, and respectful of the different cultures and traditions of others. Classroom visits and observations of pupils at play confirmed that they are keenly aware of their own responsibility to support and respect each other.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They told inspectors that they enjoy the after-school clubs and fun things they get to do during the day. Participation in sporting or musical events outside school is common.
- Additional funding to boost physical education (PE) and sports is used effectively. This includes the provision of a range of clubs and training for staff to provide better PE and sports lessons. The school has recently won an award for its PE and sports provision.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses does not focus sharply enough on the key areas that need to be improved. As a consequence, the school's development plan lacks clarity and does not concentrate on the main priorities for improvement keenly enough. Leaders need to address this aspect of their work as a matter of urgency.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has seen many changes in the way it operates since the previous inspection. Central to this has been the move to federation with Hempstead Junior School, which occupies the same site as Hempstead Infant School. Consequently, both schools share one governing body, with a committee structure that covers different key aspects of each school.
- Governors carry out their statutory duties well and are increasingly effective in their roles. Their strategic overview of areas such as safeguarding, finance and the overall quality of provision has ensured that the school is a safe place to be and is on an upward trajectory.
- Governors know the school increasingly well. They are aware of the school's strengths because of the systems that are in place to monitor the quality of provision. Governors are less well informed about the key priorities that the school needs to address, because current improvement planning does not link closely enough with leaders' self-evaluation.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The culture to keep children safe is strong. Staff know what to do if they have concerns and have been trained at levels commensurate with their different responsibilities. This includes those responsible for first aid and those involved in the recruitment of staff, for instance. Policies and procedures are sound, as are safeguarding records and records of pre-employment checks on staff.
- Pupils feel safe at the school. They told inspectors that they know whom to talk to if they have problems or are worried. Parents who spoke to inspectors expressed their confidence in staff to keep their children safe. All parents who replied to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, expressed the view that their children feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good overall. Teachers know pupils well. Relationships in classrooms are positive and respectful. Consequently, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress in a range of subjects from their different starting points.
- Communication between staff is strong. Classroom visits revealed staff working well in year-group teams, providing support where it is needed most. Teaching assistants are particularly effective in supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This is particularly the case for pupils who have additional speech and language needs, or pupils who require additional support to engage in the classroom.
- Teaching and support staff use questioning well to confirm understanding and extend pupils' knowledge. They are skilled at reminding pupils of prior experiences or in personalising learning through carefully chosen questioning. This brings learning to life and helps pupils to make connections with what they already know, and so having a

positive impact on their progress.

- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school, supporting pupils' early reading and comprehension skills well. Because of this, pupils enjoy being successful readers. However, just occasionally, staff do not ensure that reading books are as closely matched to pupils' reading abilities as they should be.
- Evidence gathered in classroom visits and through the scrutiny of past and present pupils' work showed that levels of challenge for most-able pupils are not as high as they might be. Expectations are higher than in the past, but staff need to focus on this aspect of their work to ensure that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable, especially in mathematics and English.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school because of the caring environment and the way staff make learning fun. As a result, pupils are not afraid to make mistakes and attitudes to learning are strong.
- Parents speak highly of the care shown to their children by staff. This is especially the case with the parents of children who have just joined Reception. Older pupils told inspectors how they enjoy caring for their younger peers. They also enjoy the extra responsibilities available to them, including the school's 'helping hands' scheme, or as fruit or register monitors, for instance.
- Pupils' personal development is supported well by the wider curriculum. The recently developed school 'vision' also adds focus in supporting pupils to develop their resilience, confidence and sense of respect, as well as helping them to overcome challenge.
- Pupils are very clear that bullying does not happen at Hempstead. They spoke with knowledge and understanding to an inspector about what bullying is, as well as how it might affect their enjoyment of school. They were also knowledgeable about how to stay safe when using the internet, both in and outside school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Classrooms are calm and orderly places. Disruption to learning is very rare. During the inspection, inspectors were impressed with the way pupils applied themselves to the tasks in hand, although they did identify that most-able pupils are at risk of disengaging from learning when levels of challenge are not high enough.
- Absence is not a problem at Hempstead Infant School. Leaders are very aware of the few pupils who may be at risk of not attending school, or of those who attend but are often late. Specially appointed staff monitor these pupils well and intervene when needed. Therefore, levels of attendance compare well with those of other schools. This includes the attendance of pupils from vulnerable groups.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils make good or better progress in a range of subjects. This is especially the case in key stage 1, where pupils' outcomes in the last two years have compared favourably with those of other schools nationally. As a result, most pupils leaving the school are well prepared for their move to Year 3.
- Phonics provision is a strength of the school, having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make in reading and writing. Inspectors' visits to classrooms confirmed this to be the case. Pupils benefit from good-quality phonics lessons, supplemented by additional revision sessions for pupils who need additional help. As a result, the school's phonics screening checks in Years 1 and 2 compare well with those of other schools.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress relative to their needs and starting points. Provision for these pupils has been a focus in recent times. Parents are particularly pleased with the additional support their children are given and with the progress that they make.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do well at this school. Owing to small numbers, it is not meaningful to compare outcomes for these pupils with those for other pupils in the school or nationally. However, classroom visits, work scrutiny and the school's own progress information confirmed to inspectors that provision for these pupils is at least good.
- The proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2018 was disappointing when compared with the previous year's excellent results. Leaders understand that levels of challenge in classrooms are partly responsible for this. Increasing the progress that most-able pupils make needs to be a key priority across all areas of the curriculum, but especially in mathematics and English.
- Outcomes at the end of early years were not good enough in 2018, diminishing significantly in relation to the school's good results in previous years.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement because outcomes are not good enough. Too many children did not make the progress required for them to be well prepared for their move to Year 1 in 2018.
- Absence due to illness, and turnover of staff and short-term cover were significant last year, having a negative impact on the quality of provision. Changes in leadership of early years also played a part.
- Leaders have now stabilised the situation. New appointments to the staff team have been made. Evidence collected during the inspection indicates that early years is improving rapidly, but it is too early to judge the quality of provision to be good.
- Classroom visits on both days of the inspection showed that children in early years are thriving and making progress, despite only just starting school. Staff know children

well, have quickly developed secure relationships, and have started to plan opportunities that are moving children's learning forward.

- Inspectors observed children already applying what they have learned since starting school. One child explained how he was painting a sailfish, delighting in telling the inspector about how the sailfish was eating the small sardines represented by splashes of paint, while referring to the phonics work he had completed earlier.
- Staff have high expectations. Children have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Because of this, they behave well, play well together, share with others, and are kind to each other.
- The learning environment in early years is vibrant and inviting. Staff provide a wide range of opportunities in classrooms for children to develop their knowledge and understanding in all areas of learning.
- The outdoor environment promotes children's curiosity well. Children enjoy activities such as using magnifying glasses to find slugs and insects, with staff questioning and guiding children to share their ideas and take their learning further.
- Provision for children who have SEN and/or disabilities is good in early years. Joint working and partnerships with outside agencies are strong. Parents are particularly positive about this aspect of provision. One told inspectors that her child had made more progress in two weeks than in the previous two years.
- Parents who talked to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the start their children have made. They told inspectors that transition arrangements into school were very good and that they felt that their children were well cared for at school. Many parents made positive comments about good communication and the high profile of the headteacher and other leaders in the first weeks of school.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 118555 |
| Local authority | Medway |
| Inspection number | 10053056 |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 253 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | John Colam |
| Headteacher | Kate Taylor |
| Telephone number | 01634 365969 |
| Website | www.hempsteadschools federation.org.uk |
| Email address | taylk404@hempsteadinf.medway.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 23–24 May 2016 |

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 SEN and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out seven extended learning walks during the inspection, visiting every year group and class on each day of the inspection. During classroom visits, inspectors observed teaching and learning, assessed the quality of pupils' work, and talked to them about the progress they were making. Some classroom visits were accompanied by the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and as they moved around the school. This included at the start and finish of the school day, and at break- and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, non-teaching support staff, the chair of governors accompanied by three other governors, a representative group of pupils, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of both days of the inspection. Inspectors considered the 61 responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 44 accompanying free-text messages.
- A wide range of documents and policies were scrutinised, including those regarding the safety of pupils. As well as looking at pupils' work in classrooms, a separate scrutiny of English and mathematics books was held in the presence of the school's leaders for English and mathematics.
- The school's own self-evaluation, improvement planning and information about pupils' outcomes were considered. Minutes of governing body meetings and notes of visits of the local authority and independent external consultants were also considered.

Inspection team

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Clive Close, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Linda Taylor | Ofsted Inspector |
| Katherine Powell | Ofsted Inspector |

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