

Hersden Village Primary School

Shaftesbury Road, Hersden, Canterbury, Kent CT3 4HS

Inspection dates

19–20 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Hersden Village pupils are a credit to their school. They are very welcoming, friendly, polite and proud of their school. They have very positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic in all they do.
- The headteacher, acting headteacher, senior leadership teams, chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer, the directors and governors lead the school exceptionally well. They ensure that there is a very strong and highly effective collaborative culture.
- Strong leadership has secured improvements and created a culture of achievement and aspiration. It actively develops teachers' expertise and their skills as leaders.
- Children have an excellent start to education in the early years. Children are nurtured, thrive and make strong progress from their starting points. Early years leadership is outstanding.
- Teaching and learning are good. As a result, pupils make typically good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Additional funding is used well to support the learning of vulnerable pupils. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well.
- On occasion, teachers' expectations are not high enough. Challenges for pupils are not always sufficiently demanding for them to achieve the depth of learning of which they are capable. Too few pupils, particularly but not only the most able, achieve the higher standards by the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils enjoy a rich, vibrant curriculum that stimulates and inspires them to learn. It provides them with memorable learning experiences. In some subjects, however, there is not always sufficient challenge to enable pupils to achieve greater depth in their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. Their well-being and safeguarding are high priorities. Safeguarding is effective.
- Pupils enjoy school. Attendance has improved as a result of leaders' relentless hard work. However, leaders acknowledge the need to strengthen their work with parents and carers, promoting regular attendance for all pupils.
- Governors and directors provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise achievement at the end of key stage 2, ensuring that a larger proportion of pupils, especially the most able, achieve greater depth and the higher standards in all subjects.
- Ensure that teaching provides appropriate challenge so that all pupils develop strong subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding across the wider curriculum.
- Continue working in partnership with parents to encourage regular attendance for all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher's commitment to providing the best possible education for pupils is strongly reflected in the united sense of purpose and determination of the leadership team. High expectations, ambition and the pursuit of excellence are shared by leaders at all levels. There is no complacency, but a steely determination to build on current successes and secure further improvement, especially in pupils' outcomes.
- The strong and highly effective collaborative leadership from both the school's and trust's leaders has ensured that the quality of teaching and learning remains a constant focus and outcomes for pupils are improving. The strategic forward planning from this collaborative leadership demonstrates that, despite the forthcoming expansion of the school and all that that entails, the strategy for continuous improvement is robust and unwavering. The school is outward looking and senior leaders are committed to providing the best, not only for the pupils of Hersden Village but also for all pupils in the community.
- The collaborative culture that pervades the school is exceptionally strong and clearly benefits staff and pupils. There is a tight network of support, coaching and mentoring for the acting headteacher to ensure a seamless transition to his role as substantive headteacher of the expanded school.
- The very large majority of staff, in responding to Ofsted's survey, express their confidence in the leadership. They agree that the school has improved and are proud to work there. Leaders are attentive to the well-being and workload of staff and staff feel well supported. One member of staff wrote: 'I particularly like the trust's well-being days introduced for all staff.' Another commented: 'The school is very supportive and always goes above and beyond to support me in my role.'
- Staff value and embrace the high-quality professional development opportunities open to them to enhance and develop their skills. The sharing of expertise extends across and beyond the trust. Senior leaders set great store in getting the best from staff and developing their leadership skills.
- Senior leaders know the strengths of the school extremely well through their incisive and effective checks on the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' progress. As a result, priorities are correctly identified and detailed plans for further improvement are established. There are clear milestones, identifying when things will be achieved. These help leaders, governors and trustees to assess the impact and success of actions. If any weaknesses in teaching are identified, a range of support and guidance is established to ensure that pupils' learning is not compromised and that improvement in the quality of teaching is expected.
- Leaders work constructively with parents, staff and other agencies to support vulnerable pupils extremely well. There is an uncompromising commitment to these pupils doing at least as well as their peers through appropriate support.
- The highly effective, skilled leadership of the provision for pupils with SEND ensures that teachers and leaders are very responsive to individuals' needs. The special educational needs coordinator works very productively with teachers, support staff,

external agencies and parents to ensure that additional funding is targeted effectively. The monitoring of any additional support is robust to ensure that it is successfully making a difference for pupils.

- The pupil premium strategy is highly effective. Leaders identify any potential barriers to learning and take actions to minimise or overcome these. As a result, leaders secure very good and improving academic progress as well as impressive personal development for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school.
- The school uses the sport premium funding extremely well. It is used very effectively to increase pupils' skills and engagement in sports and exercise. It promotes healthy lifestyles. Its use supports increased participation in competitive sports with other schools in the trust, the purchase of additional resources and the development of pupils' skills as play leaders. Pupils have regular early morning physical activity. There are opportunities for involving parents in supporting their children to make healthy lifestyle choices.
- The school's values of friendship, compassion, truth and respect are woven into school life and have a demonstrable impact on its culture and ethos. The curriculum is strongly underpinned by pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of fundamental British values. In their response to Ofsted's questionnaire, almost all pupils agreed that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and planned very carefully to engage all pupils. Leaders are rightly developing the curriculum further as there is breadth but not always sufficient depth to learning. Equal opportunities are promoted exceptionally well and pupils learn without fear of discrimination of any type. Much learning is planned around first-hand experiences. A group of pupils in discussion about their trip to Hever Castle agreed that they 'learned a lot more because of the experience of being there, not just learning facts from a book'.
- The creative curriculum helps pupils develop curious, enquiring minds. Music and the arts have a very high profile. Clubs, visits and visitors enrich the curriculum. These activities motivate pupils and make a significant contribution to their personal and academic development by broadening their horizons and raising their aspirations.
- Parents are supportive of the school. They appreciate the support given, not only to pupils but to families as well. One parent wrote: 'The school are always very supportive with my concerns or worries and always help when I need it.'

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. The trust is about to bring in changes to the system of governance which will, among other things, strengthen the focus on standards.
- The board of directors and the chair of the local advisory board know the school well and have a good understanding of the strengths and key priorities for further improvement.
- The chair of the board of directors has the skills and expertise to provide strong strategic leadership. She challenges and supports the school's leaders and holds them to account.

- Governors on the local advisory board are well informed by school leaders but also through their own monitoring visits to the school. There is oversight of additional funding to ensure that spending provides value for money by making a difference to pupils.
- Information on pupils' progress is scrutinised and questions asked. There is a clear focus on raising the standards of pupils' attainment and improving pupils' life chances.
- Governors and directors understand and fulfil their statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding and welfare.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' safety and protection have the highest priority in the school. The school's systems, policies and procedures are well established and implemented very effectively. Staff are aware of their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe and senior leaders ensure that they are vigilant in doing so. Staff are very well trained to identify any concerns about pupils' welfare and know the reporting and recording procedures to follow.
- The headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead and other school leaders are trained to be deputies for this role. An experienced safeguarding lead works in all the trust schools and is based at Hersden. She has a background of relevant skills and expertise, and ensures that the training for all staff, including the trust's safeguarding team, is of the highest quality.
- If a concern is raised, leaders take prompt and effective action to make sure that pupils receive appropriate and timely help, where necessary. The efficient and well-organised record-keeping of all concerns, referrals to outside agencies and follow-up actions are carefully logged and analysed using a secure online system. Recruitment checks are completed thoroughly and efficiently. The single central record meets all statutory requirements and is checked regularly by leaders and governors.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they are well cared for. A group of pupils agreed that 'We're safe because we're all friends here and we all know each other.' Parents agree that their children feel safe in school. All staff agree that the school keeps pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' generally strong subject knowledge enables them to provide interesting and stimulating activities for pupils, as well as explaining things clearly. Teachers use questioning well to check that pupils understand the tasks and what they are learning. They allow pupils time to reflect and discuss their work. Pupils make good progress.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' clear and high expectations for conduct in lessons. This helps them to learn well. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They are interested and enjoy what they do. They work extremely well together, supporting each other successfully with their learning. They listen politely to others' views and opinions, even if they do not agree with them.

- Pupils become increasingly able to reflect on and evaluate their own learning and on that of other pupils. They say they find this helps them to improve their work. Tasks are usually well matched to the different needs of pupils. In some cases, pupils select tasks for themselves from work of different levels of difficulty. Mostly, pupils enjoy challenging themselves as they are confident to take risks. Some pupils say that even the most challenging work is too easy for them. On occasion, pupils have to complete a less challenging task first, even if they are confident they could complete the harder challenge. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they could.
- There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils that support learning well. Pupils are confident to take risks in their learning and 'have a go', because they know their efforts will be valued and encouraged. One pupil said, 'It's okay to make mistakes as long as you learn from them.' Pupils want to do well and they work hard.
- Teachers often draw on high-quality texts as well as lots of first-hand experiences as starting points for pupils' writing. Pupils enjoy writing and write extensively across a range of subjects. They develop a good knowledge of the different language features required to successfully write in different styles and for different purposes. Pupils value the opportunities they have to talk about writing before committing their ideas to paper.
- Pupils learn editing and proofreading skills as well as grammar, punctuation and spelling. They become increasingly adept at using these aspects to enhance the quality of their writing. By Year 6, some of the pupils' writing is of a very high quality.
- Phonics skills are taught well and used effectively by most pupils to help them read unfamiliar words. These skills get reading off to a flying start in the early years and key stage 1.
- Teachers promote reading for enjoyment very well. In all classes, the teacher reads aloud to pupils on a daily basis, which the pupils say they love. There is a focus on reading. Leaders and teachers have worked hard and undertaken lots of training to lift pupils' achievement and strengthen pupils' progress. Texts read aloud or linked to particular topic themes make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example by exploring prejudice, beliefs and empathy.
- In mathematics, teachers have undertaken lots of training, including the development of pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. Teaching challenges pupils to solve increasingly complex problems and deepen their mathematical knowledge. Teachers find meaningful ways to include mathematical learning across the wider curriculum. Pupils are becoming increasingly adept at explaining their thinking rather than simply seeking to get the right answer. This is helping them to make good progress.
- Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution to pupils' learning by providing additional support and challenge when pupils are working individually or in small groups. There is strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants, which supports the learning of all pupils.
- Within the overall picture of good teaching and learning, there are occasions where teachers' expectations are not always high enough. This is often, but not exclusively, for the most able pupils. This group of pupils, as a result, do not always achieve greater depth in their skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy, friendly, polite and have curious, lively and enquiring minds. The inspector was impressed with their smiling faces and cheery greetings throughout the day. Pupils have a real sense of belonging to the school's community. One parent wrote: 'Our children love this school, they are thriving and leave with a smile on their face every day.'
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their time in school and participate with enthusiasm in all that the school offers them. They present themselves and their work very well. They are proud of their achievements.
- Adults provide a very safe and nurturing environment where pupils learn to respect each other and adults. Pupils get along well together. Staff provide good support for pupils' emotional and social development as well as their academic achievement.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They understand how to keep safe in a range of situations in and out of school, including when online. They say that bullying hardly ever happens at school but it gets sorted out very quickly if it does happen. They also said that some call it bullying when it is just friends falling out. They know how to recognise different types of bullying. Pupils are confident that they can turn to adults in school if they have any worries.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club receive a safe, happy and sociable start to the day. For some, breakfast club has helped to improve their attendance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Most follow their teacher's instructions well, are attentive in lessons and behave well.
- Pupils demonstrate tolerance and understanding of those who find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour. Pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs are supported effectively to minimise any disruption to the learning of others.
- Pupils enjoy breaktimes and lunchtimes on the playground. They play together well. At the end of play, however, not all pupils respond immediately to the bell and a few continue playing or kicking a ball. Some say they are supposed to line up quietly but others chat away and are not told to stop. Pupils clearly know right from wrong but there is confusion when adults' expectations are not made clear.
- Leaders have worked extremely hard to improve the school's overall attendance. It has improved but remains below the national average. Leaders continue to work to secure further improvement. Most pupils attend school regularly but in a small school like Hersden Village, it only takes three or four pupils to be absent for the overall percentage to dip below average. The number of pupils who were persistently absent last year reduced compared to previous years. Leaders make sure that pupils who miss time in school make stronger progress when they are at school to help them catch up.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Published information on pupils' attainment and progress needs to be viewed with caution as it does not accurately reflect pupils' achievements. This is because the size of the cohorts and key groups in each year are very small, and the number of pupils fluctuate during the year. In 2018, for example, one pupil represented around 9% in Year 2 and 7% in Year 6. The current picture for this academic year is different again.
- The typically good teaching means that pupils make strong progress from their varied starting points in reading, writing and mathematics, and across a range of foundation subjects. This is demonstrated in pupils' books and in the school's records of individuals' progress. Their progress, very positive attitudes and well-developed personal skills prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- In 2018, the proportions of pupils who reached the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 were above the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of key stage 2, the proportions of pupils were above the national averages for writing and mathematics but for reading the proportion was close to the national average. As a result, very few pupils did not achieve the expected standards.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2018, pupils' progress in reading was weaker compared to their progress in writing and mathematics. Leaders' actions are strengthening current pupils' progress in reading and it is now at a similar rate to the progress they are making in writing.
- In 2018, the proportions of pupils who achieved greater depth at the end of Year 2 were above the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, the proportion achieving greater depth was just above the national average in writing but very few pupils reached the higher standards in reading or mathematics.
- Based on the work in pupils' books, current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, are making consistently strong progress in both English and mathematics.
- Topic work shows a breadth of learning across the curriculum. Leaders are, rightly, focusing on securing high-quality learning to deepen pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average for several years. This dipped slightly in 2018, although most pupils did reach the expected standard. Pupils use their phonics skills well.
- The small and varying proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 make year-on-year comparisons difficult. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school, including those who are most-able, is good. Pupils with SEND are supported well and make good progress. The support they receive in class and, when appropriate, out of class meets their needs effectively. It enables most to fully participate in activities alongside other pupils.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children's starting points are generally below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language skills, reading and writing, and in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Children are given an excellent start and make very strong progress to catch up. By the end of Reception, in 2018, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average. This has been the pattern for the past five years. In the current year, the small number of children in the Reception class mostly have similar starting points to previous years. The school's assessments, which are accurate, indicate their excellent progress.
- As there were so few children this year, they are being taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. A tremendous amount of thought and planning has been undertaken to ensure that the children get the full benefit of the early years curriculum, with the added bonus of being with older pupils. Leaders and staff ensure that children have an exceptionally strong start. Children quickly settle into the routines and expectations of the classroom. They swiftly develop confidence and independence. By the end of the Reception Year, children are very well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- There are good procedures for getting to know children before they start at school and the very positive relationships established at this initial stage continue throughout the children's time in the early years. Staff know the children very well. In this small group, individual's needs are identified very quickly. They are supported in all aspects of their basic skills, and particularly speech and language. Children thrive socially and emotionally. This helps to overcome barriers to learning and helps them make rapid progress.
- Children's well-being is paramount. All children's welfare needs are met extremely well and all necessary actions are taken to support children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Children are nurtured and challenged very well.
- Staff have clear and high expectations to ensure that children are safe, happy and engaged in their learning activities. Teaching is highly effective. Early reading, writing and number are taught very effectively and in fun ways. Questioning helps to develop children's language as well as their thinking and reasoning skills. Highly stimulating activities both inside and outside the classroom spark children's curiosity and imagination. As a result, children are motivated, involved and engaged.
- Behaviour is excellent. Children are considerate and share well with each other. They are extremely well cared for and encouraged to look after themselves and stay safe. Children concentrate exceptionally well and show great determination to succeed when faced with a challenge. In both indoor and outdoor learning, staff create motivating and exciting experiences to develop children's curiosity and engage their enquiring minds.
- The trust's early years leader provides outstanding leadership. Ongoing training, advice, support and monitoring ensures that the aspirations of all staff are very high. Outstanding practice draws on the latest research and developments, and is shared across the trust.

School details

Unique reference number	138579
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10058159

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Fiona Trigwell
Headteacher	Victoria Acors
Telephone number	01227 710477
Website	www.hersden.kent.sch.uk/
Email address	headteacher@hersden.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2018

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Stour Academy Trust. The multi-academy trust (MAT) has a board of trustees who refer to themselves as directors. The chief executive officer (CEO) and the deputy chief executive officer work closely with the school. Local governance is provided by a local advisory board.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2017 and is also the headteacher of another school in the MAT. Currently, the school has three classes with mixed-age groups and one Year 6 class. In 2020, the school will be expanding to a one-form entry school with plans for further expansion to a two-form entry school in 2022. An acting headteacher is working alongside the current headteacher, prior to becoming the substantive headteacher in September 2020.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school offers a daily breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes accompanied by the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- The inspector examined samples of pupils' work and talked to individuals and groups of pupils about their learning and their views of the school. She heard some pupils read, and observed pupils arriving at school and their behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and the acting headteacher as well as with other leaders in school and from the trust. Meetings were held with the CEO and deputy CEO of the trust, the chair of the local advisory board and the chair of the board of trustees.
- The inspector examined a range of documents, including: leaders' checks on the school's performance and the quality of teaching and learning; the school development plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- There were 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 13 free-text comments. The inspector spoke to some parents at the start of the day and received one email message. The inspector also took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 46 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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