



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Harrietsham CE Primary School

Kent Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 16-17 June 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

© Crown copyright 2004. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the school	iv
Introduction	1
Main findings	1
Key issues	3
Inspection findings	3
Standards achieved by the pupils	3
The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	5
The quality of education	6
Leadership and management	8
Implementation of the action plan	8
Appendix – Information about the inspection	10

Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Harrietsham CE Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Acting Headteacher:	Mrs J Silk
Address of school:	Church Road Harrietsham Maidstone ME17 1AJ
Telephone:	01622 859261
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mrs E Roberts
Local education authority area:	Kent
Unique reference number:	118622
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr R Ellis HMI
Dates of inspection:	16-17 June 2004

Introduction

1. Harrietsham CE Primary School is situated in Harrietsham, near Maidstone, and is smaller than most primary schools. Most of the 111 pupils live close to the school. The proportion of pupils having special educational needs is below the national average but the proportion with Statements of Special Educational Needs is broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average.
2. The school was inspected in October 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.
3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of October 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on four occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In June 2004 two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of October 2002.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:
 - standards have risen since the inspection in October 2002;
 - pupils make a good start in the reception year; they make sound gains within the six nationally prescribed areas of learning;
 - standards of attainment are generally at expected levels in the core subjects by the end of Key Stage 1;
 - despite results in national tests in 2003 that were mostly above average, standards in Key Stage 2 as a whole are variable and generally below those expected for the pupils' ages;
 - standards in English are improving and are at the expected level for the higher attaining pupils, but some pupils are hampered by limitations in their vocabulary and a lack of secure strategies when writing. However the pupils use their literacy skills appropriately in different subjects; the standard of work seen in information and communication technology (ICT) was below the expected level for the majority of pupils. Many older pupils have had limited opportunities to develop their ICT skills in previous years;
 - an analysis of attainment data demonstrates that most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment but some underachieve;
-

-
- the pupils are making sound progress in lessons overall. Those pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue are making substantial gains in their learning over time. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged effectively;
 - the pupils' attitudes to learning are good and often very good. There has been a significant improvement in the presentation of their work;
 - the pupils are polite and well behaved. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good overall;
 - the provision for the pupils' moral, and social development is good and that for their spiritual and cultural development is sound;
 - attendance figures have improved and are in line with the average for primary schools. The pupils are punctual in the morning;
 - relationships with the parents and the community are good. The school is oversubscribed. Regular newsletters, termly meetings with their children's class teachers and updates on the topics that are being covered keep parents aware of how the school is developing and of how their children are progressing;
 - the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the inspection in 2002. All of the teaching was satisfactory or better and a significant proportion was good. The good teaching is a significant factor in the consistently sound progress that the pupils are making in their learning. The classroom assistants made an effective contribution to the pupils' learning;
 - marking is becoming systematic and there were many examples of effective marking that helped the pupils to improve the quality of their work. Homework generally relates effectively to work done in lessons and provides parents with an indication of the work that their children are doing in school;
 - a system for recording the pupils' assessment data has been introduced and is being used to provide information for setting targets for the pupils and to track the progress that they are making. However, targets are not set in all subjects and, in some subjects, the use of assessment data to match tasks to the pupils' needs is underdeveloped;
 - the curriculum has been improved and the national programmes of study are taught throughout the school. The school is developing interesting and appropriate activities in the foundation subjects;
 - plans for a purpose-built primary school on a new site have been approved and it is expected that the building will be ready by the end of the spring term 2006. Currently the school lacks sufficient space and the provision for ICT is hampered by the constraints of the building;
 - resources are being increased as the budget allows but are limited in many subjects, including English mathematics, ICT and science;
-

- health and safety requirements are not always met when portable electrical appliances are used in classrooms;
- the headteacher provides good leadership and management. She has a clear vision for the future of the school, and her work is sharply focused on raising the pupils' attainment and the quality of their education;
- the headteacher has implemented a systematic programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. The observations clearly identify strengths and aspects that require development. However, performance management is not well established;
- the headteacher and governors have a clear aim to improve the school. The school development plan is sound and is designed to ensure that the quality of educational provision will be maintained throughout the transition of the school to its new site;
- the governing body is effective and is holding the school to account for the standards that the pupils achieve.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- improve the use of assessment information to identify the pupils' achievements and to provide tasks that are well matched to their needs;
- increase the opportunities for the pupils to develop their ICT skills;
- eradicate underachievement, particularly for the most able pupils;
- manage the process of change to ensure that the quality of educational provision is maintained while the school move to its new site;
- ensure that health and safety requirements are met in relation to the use of portable electrical equipment.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Standards have risen since the inspection in October 2002. In the 2003 national tests all the pupils in Year 2 achieved the expected Level 2 or above. However, the proportion of the pupils that achieved the higher Level 3 was below what was anticipated. Standards in reading were well above average when compared to all schools nationally but standards in writing and mathematics were well below average.

8. At Key Stage 2, 81 per cent of the pupils reached the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics and 88 per cent did so in science. There was an improvement over previous

years in the proportion of the pupils that achieved the higher Level 5. Almost one third of the pupils achieved Level 5 in English, two thirds in mathematics and over half in science. Standards were well above the national average in mathematics, above average in science, and average in English.

9. Pupils make a good start in the reception year; they make sound gains within the six nationally prescribed areas of learning. Pupils' attainment on entry varies from year to year; most of the pupils in the present reception year are working at the expected levels for their age except in ICT, where there are limited opportunities to develop their skills effectively.

10. Standards of attainment are generally at the expected levels in the core subjects by the end of Key Stage 1. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 2 are more varied but overall are below those expected for their age group.

11. Standards in English are improving and are at the expected level for the higher attaining pupils, but some pupils are hampered by limitations in their vocabulary and a lack of secure strategies when writing, particularly for spelling. More systematic teaching of English is helping the pupils to overcome these weaknesses gradually.

12. The pupils in the Foundation Stage have made good progress in their literacy skills. They listen well to adults and to each other and they answer questions sensibly and often in complete sentences. Some of the pupils read fluently from a suitable range of books and all of the pupils enjoy hearing stories and talking about the characters. They form recognisable letters and their writing makes sense phonically.

13. The pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 speak clearly and confidently and listen attentively. In all classes the pupils have sufficient opportunities to discuss their work with a partner and this improves the qualities of their answers. The pupils read words and phrases accurately but they are less secure in working out the meaning of more complex text. There has been too little support for the teaching of guided reading in the past and the school still has too few books of a suitable quality, although this is gradually improving.

14. The pupils' presentation and handwriting are generally sound throughout the school. The pupils write for a suitable range of purposes and this is an improvement since the last inspection when the scope of writing was limited. The pupils use their reading, writing and recording skills suitably across the curriculum. For example, in a study of the local area the pupils in Years 3 and 4 used a brochure created by the older pupils to find out and record facts about places of interest in the village. In most of the classes the pupils' spelling is weak and this mars their work. However, the pupils in Year 2 used a wide range of interesting words on their holiday posters. The work of the most able pupils in Year 6 was well constructed, used varied vocabulary and expressed individual viewpoints.

15. In mathematics pupils in the reception class could recognise and create simple patterns and could count groups of up to ten everyday objects reliably. Some pupils had learned strategies for solving number problems and were recording their work using appropriate formal mathematical notation. Most pupils in Key Stage 1 are achieving the standards expected for their age. Some pupils in Key Stage 2 have attained or exceeded the expected standards for their age but standards overall are below the national average. Many pupils in Year 6 have a sound understanding of place value and their mental and written calculations are generally accurate.

16. Standards in science lessons varied but were broadly in line with national expectations across both key stages. In Year 6, the pupils designed and carried out their own experiments to test how solids dissolved in water. The pupils understood the need to make their experiments a fair test and made predictions about what they expected to happen. Some pupils were able to use their existing scientific knowledge to explain their predictions. The pupils in Key Stage 1 were able to identify the materials that everyday objects were made from and pupils in the reception class could suggest how objects would move when subjected to a pushing or pulling force.

17. Standards of work seen in ICT were below the expected level for the majority of pupils. Many older pupils have had limited opportunities to develop their ICT skills in previous years. The gaps in their knowledge, coupled with the frequent changes in teaching staff and limited access to resources, have complicated the planning of teaching and learning. In some classes the pupils show a good level of skills and confidence but most have only developed a limited ICT capability. However, standards in ICT are rising and increasing use is made of ICT for learning in a range of subjects.

18. An analysis of attainment data demonstrates that most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment but some underachieve. The pupils are making sound progress in lessons overall. Those pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is not their mother tongue are making substantial gains in their learning over time. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged effectively.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

19. The provision for the pupils' moral and social development is good, and that for their spiritual and cultural development is sound. The pupils are trusted to use expensive equipment and they respond positively to this. The pupils know right from wrong and they generally obey the school's rules without reminders. This leads to a pleasant atmosphere in which the pupils feel safe and secure.

20. There are good systems to provide the pupils with opportunities to grow in independence and to take an active part in the daily running of the school. Their views are sought through the school council and are acted upon; this is a strength of the school. The pupils work together well in lessons and value each other's views and opinions.

21. Cultural provision is better in the lower school, where there are many displays exploring the lives of children in other countries. In the lower Key Stage 2 class the pupils followed up a lesson on Islam by thinking about the relationships in their own families. Despite learning about the variety of people's beliefs in religious education lessons, and following international sporting events, the older pupils do not have as secure an insight into multicultural issues.

22. The pupils' spirituality is soundly developed through the caring ethos of the school, through contact with the local faith communities and through a daily time to reflect. The school uses the local environment to help the pupils to appreciate the natural world and the changes that occur during the seasons of the year.

23. The pupils are polite and well behaved. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good overall. The introduction of games at lunchtime has increased the pupils' enjoyment and they played sensibly despite the extremely hot weather during the inspection.

24. The pupils' attitudes to learning are good and sometimes very good. Most pupils take pride in their work, respond positively to the tasks they are given, and value the contributions to lessons from their teachers and other pupils.

25. The teachers are consistent in the management of the pupils' behaviour and this enables the pupils to concentrate more effectively on their work. There has been a significant improvement in the presentation of the pupils' work and they are happy to talk about what they have done and what they are learning.

26. Attendance figures have improved and are in line with the average for primary schools. The number of authorised absences is higher than is usual for primary schools. It is much higher than it was at the time of the last inspection because of several families whose children miss school regularly, despite the school's good efforts to challenge poor attendance. Pupils are punctual in the morning.

27. Relationships with the parents and the community are good. The school is oversubscribed. Regular newsletters, termly meetings with their children's class teachers and updates on the topics that are being covered keep parents aware of how the school is developing and of how their children are progressing.

The quality of education

28. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the inspection in 2002. It was satisfactory or better in all lessons and in eight it was good. There was good teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is a significant factor in the consistently sound progress that the pupils are making in their learning. In the best lessons the work proceeded at a brisk pace, classroom organisation and management of the pupils were effective and unobtrusive, the teachers had a secure grasp of the subject, and clear learning objectives were shared with the pupils and were referred to during the lesson. In all of the lessons the classroom assistants made an effective contribution to the pupils' learning. They were aware of the purpose of the different parts of the lessons and intervened meaningfully during the introductory elements of the lessons as well as during the group or independent sessions.

29. Changes to staffing and appropriate training have contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching and to the high expectations evident in a significant number of lessons. Planning formats are consistent across the school and prompt teachers to consider such aspects as learning objectives, differentiating tasks according to the pupils' ability, the use of ICT, and evaluation in literacy and numeracy. The teachers have become more adept at planning work that meets the needs of the range of pupils in their classes, at using a suitable range of strategies to engage the pupils' interest and in using questions more successfully to encourage the pupils to think carefully before answering. However, tasks are not consistently well matched to the pupils' needs in all subjects.

30. Marking is becoming more systematic and there were many examples of effective marking that helped the pupils to improve the quality of their work. Homework generally relates effectively to the pupils' work in lessons and it provides parents with an indication of the work that their children are doing in school.

31. The school has developed suitable systems for assessing the pupils' attainment and for checking their progress. Pupils are assessed half termly and individual targets are set in some subjects. The recording of these targets is not consistent. For example, in some pupils'

books the English targets are given National Curriculum levels, in others the statements are given without levels and in some books there are no targets. This year data is being used more effectively to identify and provide additional support next term for those pupils who have not made as much progress as they should have; this work is in the early stages of implementation. Additionally, in some subjects the use of assessment data to match tasks to the pupils' needs is underdeveloped.

32. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented over the last two years and, although there are still aspects such as guided reading that are under-resourced, the teachers are reasonably secure in their grasp of the demands of the national initiatives. However, a delay in introducing the strategies has impeded standards in writing, particularly in Key Stage 2, where the average pupils are less certain in the use of syntax than their younger counterparts. Personal targets are set for the pupils in English and in mathematics and these are understood by the pupils.

33. The curriculum provided in the reception class is good and covers all the nationally agreed areas of learning. The provision for the pupils offers them increasingly challenging experiences which enable them to build on their previous learning.

34. The curriculum for the rest of the school is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. A whole-school curriculum map has been introduced that provides for progression and now clearly identifies, for all teachers, what it is they are expected to teach and what the learning outcomes should be. The teachers have begun to work together to develop the links between different areas of the curriculum. Opportunities for using and applying ICT have been identified and there has been some improvement in the resources that are available for teaching and learning ICT. However, the limitations in resources impede the pupils' progress throughout the school.

35. Improvements in medium and long-term planning mean that a suitable range of subjects is being taught systematically throughout the school. Consequently, the pupils are now receiving more appropriate, coherent and progressive curriculum provision than at the time of the previous inspection. The co-ordinators are developing the foundation subjects to make them more responsive to the school's situation, by introducing interesting and appropriate activities. Overall the curriculum has been enriched by opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand experiences in the locality and elsewhere.

36. Appropriate support is provided for the pupils with additional educational needs and they have full access to the curriculum. A recent review of the pupils' difficulties highlighted the urgent need to re-classify some pupils as having special educational needs and provide them with additional support.

37. Plans for a purpose-built primary school have been approved and it is expected that the building will be ready by the end of the spring term 2006. Currently the school lacks sufficient space for aspects of physical education and the provision for ICT is hampered by the constraints of the building.

38. Resources are being increased as the budget allows but are limited in many subjects including English, mathematics science and ICT. The lack of adequate resources places unreasonable demands on the teachers' time when they have to photocopy materials or carry supplies from the stores. There is a health and safety issue when projector leads are draped

across rooms because there are too few electric sockets and there is no provision for shielding the power cables.

Leadership and management

39. The current acting headteacher has been appointed as the substantive headteacher with effect from September 2004. The headteacher provides good leadership and management, and has a clear vision for the future of the school. Her work is sharply focused on raising the pupils' attainment and the quality of their education. The school's self-evaluations measure its effectiveness accurately.

40. The headteacher and governors have a clear aim to improve the school and are drawing up a development plan that is intended to ensure that the quality of educational provision will be maintained throughout the transition of the school to its new site. The headteacher recognises the importance of managing the transition so that the current pace of school improvement is not slowed.

41. The headteacher has implemented a systematic programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. The observations clearly identify strengths and relative weaknesses. This has resulted in appropriate professional development which has led to improvements in aspects of teaching, particularly in the lesson planning and in the use of assessment data in literacy and numeracy. However, performance management is not well established.

42. A system for recording the pupils' assessment data has been introduced. It is being used to provide information for setting targets for the pupils and to track the progress that they are making in relation to those targets. The school has completed analysis of the pupils' work in previous tests and has identified gaps in the pupils' learning. As a result of this analysis, schemes of work have been modified to address the weaknesses.

43. The governing body is effective and is holding the school to account for the standards that the pupils achieve. The governors are supportive of the headteacher and the staff and they are increasingly involved with the daily life of the school. The chair of governors has played a key role in the development of the school. Governors' committees continue to review the school's policies. Following training, the governors now monitor lessons and are able to analyse and evaluate performance data to track the progress that the school is making.

44. The school is committed to staff development and both the teachers and support staff have taken advantage of training to improve their expertise. The local education authority (LEA) has supported the school through the work of its subject advisers and has provided training tailored to the needs of governors and staff, for example in improving the teaching in the foundation subjects. The LEA's help has been well received by the school.

Implementation of the action plan

45. The inspection report of 2002 required the school to address four key issues. These principally related to: improving the quality of teaching; securing effective leadership and management; strengthening the role of the governing body in the leadership of the school; and improving the curriculum and assessment. Good progress has been made in respect to the first three issues and reasonable progress has been made in relation to the fourth.

46. There was no unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection and the proportion of teaching that was good or better was similar to the proportion seen in most primary schools.

47. The new headteacher has rigorously monitored teaching and learning and has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The role of subject co-ordinators is developing and they are held accountable for the subjects that they manage.

48. The governing body has been restructured and additional governors have been recruited. The chair of governors provides good leadership and the governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Governors monitor the pupils' progress and are holding the school to account.

49. Schemes of work have been modified and the previous imbalance in the allocation of time given to the different subjects in the teachers' short-term planning has been successfully addressed. Realistic individual targets for reading, writing and mathematics have been introduced for all pupils.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in October 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in April, August, and October 2003, and in February 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of October 2002.

In June 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Eleven lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and four registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, senior staff, a representative from the LEA and a group of Year 6 pupils. Informal discussions were held with other staff, governors, parents and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of October 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.