



Harcourt Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118871
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280417
Inspection dates 29 November 2005 to 30 November 2005
Reporting inspector David Collard RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Biggins Wood Road
School category	Foundation		Folkestone
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Kent CT19 4NE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01303 275 294
Number on roll	179	Fax number	01303 279 176
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Gane
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Taylor

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harcourt Primary School is in an area of mixed housing in Folkestone, Kent. Children start school with standards below those expected for their age. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage but 10 per cent, all of whom speak English, come from a Nepalese background. The school is presently being run by an acting headteacher, formerly the deputy, with substantial support from the local authority. A new headteacher has been appointed from January 2006. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities connected with language or behaviour. None has a statement of educational need.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the achievements of pupils, the quality of leadership provided by subject and senior leaders and in continuing to raise the quality of teaching.

The school, whilst showing significant improvement recently, is presently providing an inadequate quality of education because standards are too low. Some pupils, from all ability levels, are still not achieving as well as they could. Measures to address the weaknesses have taken too long to be implemented. There has been a decline in standards since the last inspection. Consequently, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

With intensive support and the strong direction provided by the acting headteacher, there are measurable signs that educational provision is improving and there is a capacity to sustain this improvement. Key developments have included training to improve teaching. It is now all at least satisfactory. The school, through its recent and rigorous self-evaluation, has gained a realistic view of its position that is in agreement with that of the inspection. In a short period, these developments have impacted well on the academic progress of pupils but not yet on the standards they achieve in national tests. The pupils' good personal development is one of the factors having a positive impact on the improving academic progress. Pupils are cared for and looked after well in a safe environment. They behave well and now work harder. The provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

With the high turnover of staff, subject and senior leaders are new and do not yet provide a fully effective leadership role. In addition, teaching, whilst adequate overall, needs to be much stronger if pupils are to make up the ground they have lost. The school is working effectively to implement new initiatives and so raise standards quickly. This demonstrates the school's capacity to improve. Parents are supportive of the recent changes but rightly, some recognise that there is still a long way to go.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards that pupils achieve
- Improve the effectiveness of senior managers and subject leaders enabling them to support the drive to raise the quality of provision
- Continue the recent successful improvements to the quality of teaching so that pupils recover the ground they have lost.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

As the school recognises, achievement, whilst having started to improve recently, is inadequate and standards are too low. Children enter the school with standards below

those expected. National test results indicate that they leave both Years 2 and 6 with very low standards compared to those nationally. More importantly, individual pupils have not made enough progress between Year 2 and 6 so standards have been exceptionally low for some time.

The school's assessments, pupils' work and discussions indicate that standards, including those in the Foundation Stage, are now rising and there are now significantly more pupils achieving the levels expected of them. Further evidence can be seen in the more challenging targets for pupils in Year 6. The improved teaching and realistic monitoring are addressing many of the school's most serious weaknesses. Nevertheless, there are still some pockets of underachievement although the numbers are much lower. Low achievement is not focused into any one group. Some pupils, throughout all abilities, have had so much catching up to do. They have not had the basics upon which to build their learning. There is a similar picture for those with learning difficulties, although provision to meet their specific and individual targets is satisfactory. Those with English as an additional language are supported to improve their communication skills. However, past problems result in the same inadequate academic progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development, including that for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils apply themselves well to their lessons. This enables them to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. Children in Reception enjoy their activities. Pupils throughout the school behave well and they understand the effects of their behaviour on others. The use of small discussion groups and role-play, both within class and through the use of specialists, has a very positive effect on social development. The fruit tuck shop and breakfast club have changed learners' eating habits successfully. The importance of exercise is promoted well through physical education lessons and clubs.

High levels of support for families have meant that attendance has improved consistently over three years and is now at the national average. Almost without exception, parents feel their children enjoy school. Much is done to help pupils deal with their worries, manage their feelings and raise self-esteem. Pupils are active charity fundraisers. Good links with Shepway District Council and Kent Police enable them to contribute effectively to the local community. Pupils organise events for themselves. This, along with the wide range of visitors, help pupils gain a good understanding of the wider world and their place in society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning, including that for the Foundation Stage, are now satisfactory overall but this has only been the case recently. While this is similar to the findings of the last inspection, teaching deteriorated during the interim. Only after strong intervention have weaknesses been remedied. While pupils' progress is now satisfactory, the effect of weak teaching is a reason why standards are too low. Pupils have not achieved well enough over the longer term because they had not grasped the essential building blocks needed to improve their learning. Training for staff has improved the quality of pupils' work compared with last year but there still needs to be more good, rather than satisfactory teaching.

Teachers manage behaviour well. Assistants provide good expertise and have been instrumental in providing continuity for pupils. This was necessary due to the many changes of teachers. With greater stability have come more reliable assessments, enabling teachers to start eliminating poor pupil progress. Pupils work hard in those lessons that provide challenge. The introduction of specific individual targets this year, is ensuring pupils understand what they need to do next. They are an integral part of raising pupils' and teachers' expectations. Those with learning difficulties have become much better learners. They now make a good contribution in discussions instead of disrupting others. These new innovations are raising the understanding of what pupils are capable of and making sure all pupils achieve, as they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets the requirements to teach those in the Reception class, the National Curriculum subjects and religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship. There is an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy. The history of underachievement is being tackled by recent and more careful planning to widen the curriculum and so provide a better challenge to pupils of all capabilities. There is a good range of clubs, including homework clubs and sporting and creative activities, for pupils from Years 1 to 6. Visiting theatre groups bring added interest to work, for example in science, music and story telling. In its self-evaluation the school judged the curriculum as good. Inspectors judge it to be satisfactory, given that the recent improvements to address weaknesses are only just starting to impact on the achievement of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The staff have been successful in ensuring that pupils are well looked after and that they feel safe and secure. Behaviour has improved because specialist support workers have given pupils and their families

the high levels of support they need. This has included initiatives to raise self-esteem and introduce a love of learning. Child protection procedures have been reviewed and improved recently. Training has given staff a clearer understanding of how to identify and assist vulnerable pupils. The use of targets for groups and individuals has provided good support for those pupils with learning difficulties. However, these have not yet resulted in higher academic standards. The procedures to encourage parents to become more involved in their children's learning are effective. In Year 6, for instance, individual academic targets have been discussed on a one-to-one basis with both the pupils and their parents. Now everyone is clear about what needs to be done to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Since September 2005, the acting headteacher, working in conjunction with the local authority, has implemented effective strategies to tackle long-running underachievement and provide a clear, decisive direction to school improvement. Nevertheless, leadership and management overall are unsatisfactory because other leaders are either too inexperienced or have only been appointed recently.

The school can demonstrate its capacity to improve. The quality of education is now monitored robustly. Through analysis, improvements are given high priority. Weaknesses have been addressed. The quality of teaching has improved. Pupils now have a clearer understanding of what they are learning. This is evident, for example, in the present school focus on reading and writing. Nevertheless, standards are not high enough. The school has now identified the reason for underperformance and there are clear signs of improvement.

Increased expectations of pupils' capabilities are evident in the more demanding targets than those of recent years. Pupils' progress is tracked frequently so underachievement can be dealt with quickly and effectively. Training has been undertaken to improve the impact of the many newly appointed subject leaders and other teachers with management tasks. However, they are not yet effective and this remains a weakness from the last inspection.

Governance is satisfactory. Nearly all the governors, including the chairperson, are new in post. Their influence on school aspirations is now positive and they have challenged the school successfully, for example by seeking rigorous external views on the work of the school. They oversee a detailed plan for school improvement, which reflects the most pressing needs. They challenge appropriately to check if objectives have been achieved. Views of pupils and parents influence improvement planning satisfactorily, for example in seeking to make the school environment a safe place to be.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Harcourt Primary School Biggins Wood Road Cheriton, Folkestone Kent CT19 4NE

1 December 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for helping us so well during our recent visit. It was interesting to hear how you are getting on at school and to see you all working. No doubt you would like to know what we have said to your teachers so I have included some of the main points below.

- You all told us how much you enjoy school and we could see that all the staff make very sure that you are kept safe, are looked after well and understand how to be healthy. We liked the idea of the fruit tuck shop.
- You and your parents said that there have been changes of teachers recently, which has made it difficult for all of you to get to know everybody quickly.
- You are all making better progress in your lessons than you were. As a result, everybody is much clearer about what they should be doing. One of the ways that your school can improve further is to make sure that that you can do even better.
- Your teachers make sure your lessons are interesting and they now have a good idea about what you are all capable of. Some of you have not done so well in the past but we think this is starting to improve. We think your school will improve further if your teachers continue with the recent improvements so that you can all catch up and do better.
- Your acting headteacher has worked hard to make sure that everybody does their best. One of the ways that your school can improve further is to make sure that other members of her team help her more.
- To make sure all of you are working at your very best we have asked that this be checked again in the near future.

Finally, we wish you all the best for your future at Harcourt and when you move on to your next school.

Yours sincerely,

David Collard (Lead inspector)