

Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114506
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	289944
Inspection date	24 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Eira Gill

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	223
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Farmer
Headteacher	Susan Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001
School address	Hailsham Road Herstmonceux Hailsham BN27 4LG
Telephone number	01323 833148
Fax number	01323 834708

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	24 April 2007
Inspection number	289944

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this average-sized primary school come from a British background. A very small minority who are not White British have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average but higher in some year groups than others. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average. More pupils have joined the school in the last two years than would normally be expected and there is a waiting list. The school has been through a period of considerable leadership change and a new headteacher is joining the school in September 2007. The school has gained a Sports Award in recognition of its work in this area.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a strong Christian ethos. Parents praise it saying, for example, 'I would thoroughly recommend the school to any prospective parents.' Pupils' achievement is good. As a result of the good progress pupils make, standards have been consistently above average, and often well above, for several years. The pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to maintain this picture of above-average standards and show good improvement in their writing skills. A good start in the Reception class helps the children to settle in well and make good progress. By the time they leave school, pupils have developed good skills in literacy and numeracy which will equip them well for the future. The school is at the heart of its community and good links ensure that pupils are able to contribute their own skills and talents to various village events throughout the year. Pupils have a strong voice in the school. A very confident school councillor commented, 'We are doing most of the organising for the school fete to raise funds for the new wallbars in the hall.' Good attendance goes hand in hand with the pupils' keen enjoyment of school life. The care, guidance and support given to the pupils are good and, as a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are good. One pupil said, 'When things go wrong for us teachers handle it really well'. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They work hard in lessons even though, in some classrooms with high numbers of pupils, space is at a premium. In these classes, it is difficult for teachers to organise practical activities to ensure pupils become independent learners. There are several reasons why pupils do so well. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and the teaching assistants' contribution to learning is very effective. There is a generous number and they are well qualified – a few are teachers. Marking is mostly good but is not consistent and seldom refers to pupils' targets in Years 3 to 6. The setting of targets by teachers is also inconsistent. The curriculum is good and well enriched with plenty of sport, art and music. Lesson planning is good overall, although planning for pupils in Years 3 and 4 does not always build upon their previous attainment, and this affects their progress, which is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good despite changes of leadership fairly recently. Leaders, including governors, make sure the school does not stand still. Good monitoring of provision and tracking of pupils' progress have enabled the school to evaluate its performance effectively. Leaders are totally correct in their evaluation of what needs to be done to improve the school. Weaknesses from the last inspection have been tackled successfully and the school demonstrates good capacity to make further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teachers in Years 3 to 6 adopt a consistent approach to setting pupils' targets and marking their work so that pupils know what to do to improve their performance.
- Develop the curriculum planning for pupils in Years 3 and 4 to ensure that all ability groups are given tasks and activities pitched at the right level to move them forward faster.
- Find ways of increasing opportunities for practical learning in Years 3 to 6 to better develop pupils' independence.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average at the end of Year 6. Pupils' overall achievement is good. The majority of children start school with expected levels of attainment for their age, although there is a wide spread of individual attainment and variation from year to year. Children make

good progress in the Reception class, although boys lag behind the girls in literacy in particular. Even so, the boys move on as well as the girls do from their respective starting points. Good progress continues through Years 1 and 2, where teachers ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to be independent in their learning. In the present Year 2 class, pupils are attaining standards that are average in reading, writing and mathematics. These standards represent good progress from a belowaverage start on entry for this particular group, although the girls are still a little further ahead than the boys. Progress from Year 3 to Year 6 is good overall, although in Years 3 and 4, pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning. In the 2006 national tests, standards were above average, with more pupils than nationally reaching the higher levels in English and science. The pupils now in Year 6 are on course to attain similar standards, with considerable improvement in writing. Standards in writing are better now because of action taken to provide more focused opportunities for writing and effective training for the teachers organised by the English subject manager.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are very attentive in lessons and concentrate well. These factors contribute much to their good achievement. Pupils have well-developed social skills and are extremely polite. Attendance is above average and is a natural off-shoot of the pupils' enjoyment of school. All pupils feel valued, safe and secure. Pupils talk knowledgeably about healthy diets and safe lifestyles. They are very aware that they need to work harder to put this understanding into practice to help the school achieve the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils take part in plenty of sporting activities. They make a good contribution to the school community and also participate well in several village events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is enhanced by the number of skilled and well-qualified teaching assistants. Strong teamwork of teachers and teaching assistants has been established. Teachers in Reception and Years 1 and 2 are particularly skilled in organising activities that enable pupils to be independent learners. At times, outstanding methods of teaching result in very effective learning. This is evident, for example, when pupils work on practical activities to learn mathematical concepts. Assessment of pupils' progress is particularly good in these year groups. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is good overall. In Years 5 and 6, planning of lessons is good and pupils are challenged well, ensuring good progress. Learning in Years 3 to 6 is sometimes affected by large numbers of pupils in small classrooms. Opportunities for independent learning are difficult to organise. This is one reason why learning slows in Years 3 and 4. Pupils in these years do not continue to have the wide variety of practical experiences that are part of daily learning in earlier years. The level of challenge in lessons in Years 3 and 4 promotes satisfactory rather than good progress. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory but marking does not always give the pupils an understanding of how they can improve their work. Very rarely do teachers in Years 3 to 6 refer to the pupils' targets for improvement when marking their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that contributes well to pupils' good achievement and personal development. The curriculum for the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 is good in all aspects. It is very well planned and ensures that learning opportunities are totally relevant and enjoyable. There are many opportunities for the pupils to develop their physical, creative and academic skills and they make good progress in all these areas as a result. The curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is good overall, although planning for the younger pupils does not always build upon their previous attainment and experience. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and is now used more effectively across the curriculum. Links with other providers and church groups give pupils plenty of opportunities to take part in sporting and other events, in addition to their daily lessons. Members of the school choir, for example, enjoy singing to their older friends in the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care of the pupils by all adults in the school is good. The school is effective in liaising with outside agencies in order to gain extra support for pupils who need it. Every pupil is valued and cared for as an individual and all staff support pupils effectively to ensure that their personal development and achievement are good. Procedures for child protection are well established and understood by all staff. Health and safety procedures are rigorous. The school works well with parents, particularly new parents, to ensure that their children have access to appropriate support. Many parents praised the school for its care of their children and several comment on the very good induction procedures. As one parent observed, 'I am very pleased I made the decision to move my children to Herstmonceux'. Although the school's procedures for setting targets to help pupils to make progress are well thought through, there is variation in how well they are used. They are used particularly effectively in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2. However, in other years, teachers' use of target setting is less effective in helping pupils to know how well they are doing, and what they need to do next to improve their performance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the school is constantly seeking ways of improving provision and provides clear educational direction. It has been effective in developing the role of subject leaders. Managers of main subjects, such as English and mathematics, have been successful in improving pupils' progress up to the end of Year 2, and in pupils' achievement in writing throughout the school. Leaders, including the inclusion manager, are energetic in their approach to monitoring, planning and training staff. Self-evaluation is honest and accurately identifies areas that need to improve. Leaders know, for example, that they need to focus more on the quality of target setting for pupils because not all teachers have been totally successful in putting the school's procedures into place. Leadership is also aware that the independent learning opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 are not as good as in earlier years and are limited by the accommodation. Although there are plans for improvement, these are in the early stages of development. Governors are now better informed following the considerable changes in

leadership. They are fully involved in school improvement planning and in monitoring the school's effectiveness. Governors have been particularly active in helping to improve the ICT curriculum and resources. The school enjoys strong partnerships with parents, the church, colleges and the community and these help to make sure pupils' learning is effective. The Christian ethos of the school is evident in assemblies and the areas for reflection around the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- 29 April 2007 Dear Pupils Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School, Herstmonceux, East Sussex BN17 4LG Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I really enjoyed talking with you and observing your lessons. You were all very polite and helpful throughout the day. Your headteacher, senior leaders and governors lead the school well. They have made several improvements since the last inspection and it has remained a good school. Here are the things that I found to be best about your school:
- Most of you make good progress in English and mathematics and by the time you leave school, standards are above average in these subjects.
- You are taught well in most classes and teachers work hard to make lessons interesting for you.
- Your behaviour is really excellent and you have good attitudes to your work and care about each other.
- Best of all, you really enjoy school. This is what I found that the school could do better:
- Make sure that all the teachers use targets and marking in a way that helps you to know how well you are doing and how you can do even better. You can help by asking your teachers how you have improved in lessons.
- Ensure that the work that you do in each year always builds on what you have done in the past. This is to help make sure that all of you make good progress in your learning each year.
- Find ways of providing more opportunities for you to learn through practical activities in Years 3 to 6 so that you become more independent. Thank you again for your help. Yours sincerely Eira Gill Lead Inspector