

Hurst Green Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114508
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	289945
Inspection date	6 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	129
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Maynard
Headteacher	Tony Bedwell
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001
School address	Hurst Green Etchingham TN19 7PN
Telephone number	01580 860375
Fax number	01580 860838

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller sized primary school than average. There is a wide social mix among pupils, but many come from favourable backgrounds. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Children enter the school with levels of abilities that are broadly typical for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly lower than the national picture. Most classes contain pupils from more than one year group.

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. The headteacher, staff and governors have succeeded in fostering a learning environment where children feel secure, want to do well and enjoy attending. A very positive picture comes through from many parents of an effective school with a happy atmosphere.

The school has worked hard to give children a wide range of interesting activities when they start school and the provision in the Foundation stage is good. As a result, children make good progress. All reach the expected levels at the end of their Reception Year and many exceed them. Good teaching and learning throughout the school ensure that pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make consistently good progress and achieve well. At the end of Year 6, standards are above average and have risen significantly in recent years. Standards are not quite as high in mathematics as they are in English and science. This is because there are not enough opportunities created for pupils to apply their good numeracy skills within other subjects or to investigate mathematical problems.

Very good welfare arrangements, especially for vulnerable pupils, and good attention to making the school feel safe and welcoming, help make care, guidance and support good. Pupils are given satisfactory day-to-day guidance to help them improve their work, but target setting it is not consistent between classes or subjects. As a result guidance does not provide pupils with a fully accurate picture of what they have achieved and what they need to do next. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good because pastoral care is high profile and effective. A good curriculum provides well for the basics, but some links between subjects are not planned effectively so that pupils' learning can be maximised. Special theme days, visits away from school and improved provision for swimming help provide a broad experience for pupils.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and staff work well as a team and have accurately identified areas to make this effective school even better. Action taken has been effective, for example extending pupils' writing skills and improving provision in the Foundation Stage. Governors give good support. They know the school well because they have innovative routines to gauge how well pupils are served. As one parent correctly perceived, 'The school sends out well balanced and mature children.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more investigational activities in mathematics and opportunities to use their numeracy skills in different subjects.
- Ensure that target setting is consistent between classes so that all pupils have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve further.
- Improve the links made between subjects so that pupils can use their knowledge and skills gained in one area to aid their learning in another.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. Their progress is good in the Foundation Stage and this continues in Years 1 to 6, leading to above average standards. This is due to effective teaching in mixed-age classes, motivated pupils and good emphasis on basic skills. Children get off to a good start in the Reception Year. All reach the expected levels by the end

of the year and many exceed them, particularly in their social and language skills. Pupils' work in Years 1 to 6, supported by the school's own checks, indicates that they reach above average standards. The oldest pupils are likely to achieve their challenging targets. Pupils are articulate speakers and talented writers. Their information and communication technology (ICT) skills have improved since the last inspection. Although pupils' mathematical skills are generally good, they do not apply their skills frequently enough in extended investigational work or within different subjects. As a result, standards are not quite as high as they are in English and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress in line with classmates, as their needs are addressed skilfully and monitored closely.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are eager to talk positively about school. Year 6 pupils are well prepared for their next schools and later life as they gain basic skills well and are mature in their outlook. Their confidence is promoted by the school's success in expecting them to succeed and help others. Year 6 pupils enjoy being buddies to younger children, but say on occasions they would also like having classmates as mentors who could help them. The school council is comparatively new, but has already influenced changes. These tend to focus on improving 'things' rather than whole school or community concerns. Most pupils work hard, behave very well and are eager to do their best in lessons and around school. They enjoy attending. Many pupils are active at playtimes and in lessons. Most are aware of what foods are best to eat and the benefits of drinking lots of water. They enjoyed and spoke highly of a recent 'healthy eating day'. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn about other cultures and important differences between faiths. Assemblies help develop pupils' reflective capacity sensitively. They readily help at local village events and raise money for good causes.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are typically taught well, although recent changes in staffing causes small variations between classes. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Lively practical work promotes children's natural desire to investigate, while developing their language and social skills particularly well. In other classes, teaching is also good. It takes effective account of the different ages found in classes and is supported by effective teaching assistants. Pupils make consistently good gains in developing their writing skills through the good range of opportunities provided. Lessons do not provide as wide a range of problem solving opportunities to apply their mathematical skills. Work in ICT is now promoted well and teachers use audio-visual whiteboards effectively to enhance pupils' learning. Relationships are particularly well developed which means pupils are willing to learn. Most listen carefully, but some explanations are overly long which causes a small number to lose attention. Displays in classes vary in quality, so pupils' work is not always displayed to the best effect. Teachers know their pupils well. Marking is good and gives pupils helpful comments about improving their day-to-day work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school plans a good range of activities which ensures pupils gain good levels of both academic and practical 'hands on' skills. There is a strong commitment to developing pupils' well-being, along with preparation for their future learning. The school has successfully extended pupils' writing skills for example. Work in ICT is now well planned. Reception provision is good and encourages children to become independent and ensures that they have a good base of early literacy and numeracy skills. Links planned between subjects do not fully extend or combine pupils' learning activities to best effect. In mathematics, there are not enough regular opportunities for pupils to carry out extended investigations or use their skills in other subjects. Indoor and outdoor physical activities are well planned for, including improved provision for swimming. A good range of extra-curricular activities, including a Spanish club, are well attended and help enrich class work. A good range of visits away from school, including a residential trip, broaden pupils' experiences. Good links with a school in Malawi help pupils develop their interest and knowledge of other cultures.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Consistently good care, guidance and support lie at the centre of pupils' good achievement and personal development. Links with the on-site playgroup help children make a smooth start to school. There are clear and effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Pupils say they feel able to talk to any member of staff and the school has provided high levels of care for specific pupils experiencing upheavals or trauma. Year 6 have specific responsibility to care for younger schoolmates, but all pupils are watchful to help others. Parents typically describe the school as having a 'family' feel. Pupils readily talk about the school's approach to preventing bullying and this helps them feel settled and safe. The school's monitoring of health and safety is good. Inconsistencies in target setting limit the effectiveness of academic guidance. The school works closely with outside agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress, especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, supported effectively by knowledgeable governors, has maintained a good team ethos despite some recent staff changes. This has kept the school moving forward by, for example, improving pupils' writing and provision in the Foundation Stage. Further priorities for development are included in the clear, concise school improvement plan. Suggestions from parents are taken seriously and have resulted in more frequent parents' consultation evenings and more flexible meal options for pupils. The monitoring of teaching is regular and effective in identifying key areas for improvement. On occasions it does not focus sufficiently on identifying ways that would help enhance the progress of pupils further. Governors give the school very good support and have clear routines to help them be persuasive 'critical friends'. Governors and staff use well established and effective self-evaluation routines to assess what goes on, but are modest about the school's overall effectiveness. This is because they have high expectations and want to do better. Rising standards, combined with improvements in

ICT and the Foundation Stage since the last inspection, show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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
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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?	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	2
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	2
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

7 June 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Hurst Green CE Primary School, London Road, Hurst Green TN19 7PN

I really enjoyed meeting you when I recently visited your school. Thank you for chatting to me around the school and on the sports field.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- You work very hard to make Hurst Green a good school.
- Children in the Reception class settle quickly to school and learn well.
- You said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you are. You said you like the 'friendly' atmosphere and I noticed it too.
- Teaching is good and teachers are kind to you.
- You know about keeping fit, drinking water and what foods are the best to eat.
- The activities you do in school like your Shakespearian plays are interesting.
- You all behave very well and the school helps you become mature.
- You make good progress in your work and reach above average standards by the time you leave.
- Your involvement with local events such as the Harvest festivals and Remembrance Day is good.

Here are the three things we would like to see improved:

- You need more investigation work in mathematics so that you learn to solve tougher 'real life' problems.
- The targets teachers set with you need to be done in similar ways in each class to help you all improve.
- Links made between subjects need to be closer to help you improve your learning even more.

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector