



High Halstow Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118434
Local Authority Medway
Inspection number 291133
Inspection dates 7–8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Sheena Macdonald HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Harrison Drive
School category	Community		High Halstow
Age range of pupils	4–11		Rochester ME3 8TF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 251098
Number on roll (school)	160	Fax number	01634 255628
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Matt Stutely
		Headteacher	Pat Sanford
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools and there are fewer than average numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are from White British heritage. Slightly more pupils than normal join or leave the school at times other than the usual.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. One parent commented that it is a 'caring school with an extremely positive outlook' and inspectors agree. Relationships are strong, behaviour is good and pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school and particularly appreciate the increasing attempts to make their learning lively and interesting. Pupils are well cared for, and guidance is good.

The leadership team have been determined and successful in their drive to raise standards from a very low level in the past. Their vision has led to a school where pupils and adults are valued, well supported and where success is celebrated. Effective partnerships have been developed with governors, parents, pupils and the wider community to build a shared commitment to further improvement. Parents overwhelmingly approve of the job the school is doing in educating their children.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. Pupils enter the school with average standards except in language and mathematical development, which are below average. Good provision in the Reception class means that children make good progress. Throughout the rest of the school all pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards have risen steadily and are now around the national average. In recent years a focus on improving writing has been successful. The school carefully analyses pupils' achievement and uses the information to provide support for those at risk of falling behind and to identify those aspects where further improvement is required.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some strengths. Teachers and teaching assistants are enthusiastic and work well together to provide enjoyable experiences for the pupils. In most lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to work together, develop confidence and practise communication skills. There is still some variation in the quality of learning, as sometimes expectations are not high enough and work is pitched at the wrong level. Newly appointed curriculum leaders are in place and, although they have not yet had an impact on raising standards or improving provision, their roles are being developed.

The leadership team use a wide range of information to develop a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. This is true particularly in relation to the quality of teaching, personal development and the curriculum. Monitoring and development planning have been focused on making sure that provision, such as the quality of teaching, improves. The current improvement plan is not sharply enough focused on improving the quality and quantity of pupils' work.

A good track record of improvement since the last inspection and a sound understanding of current strengths and weaknesses indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the focus of the school improvement plan onto pupil progress.

- Develop the roles of the curriculum team leaders so that they can monitor and support colleagues to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Raise the expectations of the quality, quantity and standard of pupils' work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the school with broadly the levels of attainment expected of four-year-olds except in language and mathematical skills which are weaker, particularly those of boys. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good and so children make good progress. Consequently children become keen learners and behave well. Throughout the rest of the school, there is evidence of improving standards across all the core subjects and attainment is now average at the ends of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Concerted efforts to assess all pupils' writing, set targets for improvement and implement strategies to support less confident writers, particularly boys, have led to improvements in pupils' work. The school carefully assesses and tracks pupils' progress and achieves its targets for individual and group attainment. Evidence from pupils' books indicates that expectations of what children might achieve are not always high enough; consequently, pupils do not always make as much progress as they might.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This aspect is a strength of the school and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A positive sense of their community and a celebration of the wider community are reinforced in assemblies and through the school's Golden Rules. Children are friendly and responsible, and able to work co-operatively and independently. They present suggestions through their elected representatives on the School Council and feel that their views are valued. Pupils respond sensibly when given responsibility for each other; for example, Year 6 pupils as Helping Hands and each Special Person of the Day in Key Stage 1. In the Smile Club, where, a child explained, 'You have to be kind and helpful,' pupils find both a sanctuary and an opportunity to help others while developing their own social skills. Behaviour is good in all year groups; pupils treat each other and adults with confidence and respect. They are happy to be at school. Attendance is satisfactory and exclusions very rare. Pupils feel safe and trust teaching and support staff to resolve any difficulties promptly and fairly. Pupils co-operate to raise money for charities for example the school linked with High Halstow pre-school to support a primary school in Sri Lanka. Awareness of the importance of being fit and healthy is fostered well by whole-school activities, such as a recycling week, skipping workshop and the successful Walking Bus initiative, which involves parents and teachers as well as pupils in promoting healthy environmentally friendly lifestyles. Average attainment in literacy, numeracy and information, communication and technology gives the children a sound basis for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers work very hard to make the learning interesting and enjoyable. Relationships are good, which helps children develop positive attitudes and display good behaviour in lessons. Teachers plan carefully and explain the objectives of lessons clearly and there is some good questioning to develop learning and sustain interest. Teaching assistants, who are well briefed, work effectively in partnership to support less confident learners. The school identified writing as an area for improvement and successful strategies were introduced. These include increased opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills and using first-hand practical experiences to stimulate ideas.

There is evidence of some good systems in place to assess and set targets for improvement. However, these do not provide enough challenge for all pupils and expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. The level of challenge in the teaching and the match of work to pupils' abilities do not always ensure children make the progress of which they are capable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. In the Reception class children develop confidence and skills through a good range of practical learning activities. Throughout the school there is a good focus on providing an active and interesting curriculum which makes links between the different subjects, and as a result pupils are enthusiastic learners. Parents comment on 'the lovely buzz coming from classrooms'. Effective programmes are in place for pupils who need extra support or who are in danger of falling behind. The curriculum for personal development is well developed and contributes to developing socially aware pupils who understand how to stay safe and healthy. The curriculum is enriched by visits, visitors and special events, such as Art and Design Week, and good use is made of the outside environment. There is a wide range of well attended clubs. The curriculum includes all subjects but some are not covered in as much depth as required and the school is undertaking a thorough review of the curriculum to further develop links between subjects and ensure that skills and knowledge are fully covered.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support for all students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, is good. The special needs coordinator works closely with class teachers, learning support staff and parents to develop well structured programmes for children with a variety of needs. Rigorous systems for safeguarding pupils are in place and all staff are trained in child protection procedures. Training,

for example in first aid, 'Take 5 for Play' and speech and language, has strengthened the role of support staff. The positive impact on pupils is monitored through in-school assessments and observations by specialist advisors. Links with outside agencies complement the school's provision effectively. Teachers give useful feedback to pupils during lessons and on their work about how to improve. Progress in English and mathematics is carefully tracked and most pupils know what their personal targets are and what they need to do to achieve them. However, academic guidance is currently based on insufficiently challenging targets. Care is taken to help pupils through the transitions from pre-school to Reception and from primary to secondary school. Parental feedback shows that this works well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher make a strong team; they have implemented effective systems to raise standards and ensure good personal development. Their determination has resulted in steadily improving provision and achievement. The school recognises the need to strengthen leadership and is currently developing the roles of curriculum team leaders. This is a new development and has yet to have an impact on improving standards and achievement. The quality of teaching is improving as a result of a programme of lesson observations by the senior team, followed by useful feedback and clear targets for improvement. Monitoring of pupils' work has been less rigorous. The leadership team knows the strengths and weaknesses in the school and recognises that there is further improvement that could be achieved. The governing body supports the school well and is involved with improvement planning. Its role as critical friend and ability to provide informed challenge are less well developed. Consultations with parents and pupils alongside good use of support from outside the school contribute to the school improvement plan. The current plan is very detailed with clear timescales, actions and resource implications. There is a strong focus on aspects relating to personal development, provision and enjoyment; however, there is insufficient emphasis on pupils' achievement. Success criteria are too general and effective evaluation systems not in place.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

Leadership and management

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

As you know we visited your school recently to find out how well you were doing. We enjoyed talking to so many of you, visiting your classrooms and seeing your work. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to us.

Here are some of the things we liked about your school:

- You behave well and are polite, friendly and sensible. Well done!
- You enjoy your learning and are very keen to help other people.
- Your school is a safe place where everyone is very well looked after. You help to make sure this is the case, especially those of you who are Helping Hands.
- Your work in English, especially writing, mathematics and science is improving.
- Your teachers and other adults work really hard to make your lessons lively and interesting.

No wonder your parents are so pleased that you attend High Halstow School.

We think your school is satisfactory but it could be even better and we know that your headteacher and the other adults want the school to keep on improving. Here are some things we have asked them to do.

- Make sure that the school improvement plan has your learning as its main focus.
- Support those teachers who have recently taken on leadership roles to do their jobs well so that they can support other teachers and improve your learning.
- Make your lessons a bit more challenging so that you all really push yourselves to do even better. We think you can do it!

Thank you again for letting us share some time in your school.