



High Firs Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 118541
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291161
Inspection date 19 September 2006
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Court Crescent
School category	Community		Swanley
Age range of pupils	4-11		BR8 8NR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01322 669721
Number on roll (school)	207	Fax number	01322 615997
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Andrew Burns
		Headteacher	Colin Turtle
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 19 September 2006	Inspection number 291161
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized primary school whose pupils come from predominantly White British backgrounds. Approximately 4% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, six of whom are at an early stage of learning to English. The school's intake is changing owing to falling rolls in the area, around 25% of pupils now come from areas of social deprivation. Attainment on entry to the school has been average in the past, but is now below There has been a high turnover of teachers in the past two years.

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 where pupils enjoy learning and achieve well. Its most outstanding feature is its dedication to nurturing pupils' well-being and to developing their confidence and self-esteem. By providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment, it creates an ethos where pupils are keen to learn. As one parent wrote, 'My children run to school every morning, the best measure I can think of'. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils underpin the pupils' outstanding behaviour. They simply know what is expected of them and respond accordingly. Children get off to a good start in Reception, where the curriculum and teaching are of good quality. Most reach the standards expected by the end of the year, but records show that few exceed them. However, the high standards seen in some pupils' work are not always reflected in their end-of-year assessments. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to do well in reading and reach above-average standards. Standards are closer to average in writing and mathematics because too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. The procedures for tracking pupils' progress through Reception and Years 1 and 2 are not rigorous enough to ensure that all make the best possible progress. Pupils make excellent progress in Years 3 to 6 and reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science in the national tests in Year 6. Pupils enjoy learning because teachers make lessons interesting and fun. The recent installation of interactive whiteboards in every classroom has added a new dimension to learning that has motivated pupils considerably. Sport has a high profile, both within the curriculum and through the very good range of clubs and competitions with other schools. First-rate teamwork and a strong commitment to raising standards are at the heart of the school's good leadership and management. They place the school in a strong position to continue its quest for excellence. Rigorous monitoring of the curriculum and quality of learning ensures a clear focus on identifying areas for improvement. Meticulous evaluation of assessment data has, for example, led to new initiatives aimed at raising standards, which are already having a good impact, for example, in writing in Years 3 to 6.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2, especially for the more able pupils.
- Sharpen up the procedures for checking on pupils' progress from entry to Year 2 in order to identify and act promptly upon any signs of underachievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and the few who are learning to speak English. Pupils consistently achieve exceptionally high standards in the Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science, placing the school in the top 10% of schools in the country. Very few pupils fail to reach the standard

expected of 11-year-olds and many exceed it. Achievement is outstanding in Years 3 to 6 because teachers have very high expectations of the pupils and set challenging targets for them. They also check their progress frequently and act quickly to give additional support to pupils who are not making enough progress. These processes have not been as rigorous in Years 1 and 2, with the result that some of the more able pupils have not reached the levels they are capable of in writing and mathematics. Pupils achieve well in Reception. Most reach expected levels by the end of the year but few were assessed as having exceeded these in past years. Some examples of pupils' work in Reception show that a few more-able children are being assessed too conservatively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal development reflects the high value that the school places on nurturing their confidence and self-esteem. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. By taking responsibility for their own actions and respecting others, they acquire maturity and develop very good relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils respond spontaneously to teachers' expectations, with the result that their behaviour is excellent. They feel safe and secure in school and have no worries about bullying. The school's good attendance levels reflect how much pupils enjoy school. As one put it, 'It's really good because it's small and friendly and the lessons are fun'. These very positive attitudes to learning underpin pupils' good achievement. Pupils are becoming increasingly aware of healthy eating, and there is great enthusiasm for the many sports clubs and events such as the 'Skipathon'. The school council makes suggestions for improvements and carries them through as well as canvassing the views of classmates. Pupils take care of the environment by composting and recycling. Their thoughtfulness and concern for the wider community are evident in fundraising activities, which they organise and run themselves. All of these initiatives prepare pupils well for their future life in society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall, with some outstanding features that promote accelerated progress in Years 3 to 6. These include challenging targets for all pupils, regular assessments and frequent checking of pupils' progress. In Reception, learning is well planned so that children acquire new skills and knowledge through structured play activities as well as direct teaching. There is good teaching of reading in Years 1 and 2, which results in high standards. However, the more able pupils in these classes have not always been given suitably challenging work in writing and mathematics. The school is already taking steps to tackle this shortcoming. Strong features of the teaching throughout the school are the warm and supportive relationships between teachers

and pupils and the high expectations of behaviour, which rarely need to be reinforced. Lessons are interesting because new technologies are used very effectively and teachers present ideas in imaginative ways to suit pupils' needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Teachers are developing new ways to link subjects together creatively to make the curriculum more meaningful but this is not yet consistent across the school. Strong links with other local schools and colleges add a further dimension to this work. A recent focus on improving boys' writing has paid dividends, while huge improvements in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) over the past 18 months have significantly improved standards. Pupils are making increasingly effective use of ICT to enrich their learning in other subjects. High priority is given to educating pupils about healthy living and environmental issues, both in lessons and through the wide range of after-school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The high level of commitment to pupils' health, safety and well-being and the many opportunities for them to develop personal responsibility and self-confidence are outstanding. Academic guidance and support are good, but are not rigorous enough in Reception and Years 1 and 2. The best practice happens in Years 3 to 6, where pupils' progress towards challenging targets is frequently checked and action taken to tackle any signs of underachievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's good leadership and management are founded on excellent teamwork. The headteacher and deputy head have led the school very effectively through a period of change when there has been a high turnover of both teachers and governors. They have created a very strong staff team who share a vision for achieving excellence in all areas of the school's work. Teachers with subject responsibilities evaluate the school's provision regularly through observing lessons, talking to pupils and examining their work. Governors also closely monitor the school's work and contribute effectively to determining its strategic direction. The school takes good account of pupils' and parents' views when evaluating how effective it is. Although all of this work has had a very positive impact on achievement in Years 3 to 6, the analysis of assessment data in Reception and Years 1 and 2 is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the more able pupils make the best possible progress. The impact of strong leadership can be seen in the very good improvements to the school's accommodation, especially for the reception class, and in the provision for ICT. Both of these initiatives have had a good impact on the quality of education. Driven by its commitment to providing the

best for all its pupils, the leadership team has a good capacity to improve the school further.

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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?	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	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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.

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

I very much enjoyed visiting your school and coming in to see your lessons. Thank you for talking to me and making me feel so welcome. You told me that you think High Firs is a good school and you are right. One of the best things about it is the way you all grow and develop in confidence because the adults encourage you to take responsibility and to care for others. Your behaviour is excellent and you work very hard in lessons. As a result, you reach very high standards by the time you leave. However, a few of the more able pupils could do better in writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. You said you really enjoy lessons because teachers make them interesting and fun. I agree and I can see that you particularly enjoy the way they use the new interactive whiteboards. The teachers are also working hard to make better links between different subjects so that your learning is even more interesting. I was pleased to see how many of you take part in all the clubs that the teachers run. The girls' computer club looked really exciting. The teachers and governors who run the school are determined to give you the very best education they can and they keep checking to make sure that the teaching is good in every subject. I have asked them to keep a closer check on how well children in the Reception class are doing and how well pupils are making progress in Years 1 and 2. This is to make sure that the more able pupils in Year 2 reach higher standards in writing and mathematics. I hope you all continue to enjoy your time at High Firs. I am sure you will continue to help the teachers to make the school even better.



The Pupils
High Firs Primary School
Court Crescent
Swanley
Kent
BR8 8NR

20 September 2006

Dear Pupils

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I hope you all continue to enjoy your time at High Firs. I am sure you will continue to help the teachers to make the school even better.

Yours sincerely

Carole Skinner
Lead inspector