

Harcourt Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118871
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	294594
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Tom Shine

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Gane
Headteacher	Alison Dakin
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Biggins Wood Road Folkestone CT19 4NE
Telephone number	01303 275294
Fax number	01303 275294

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school with an above average percentage of pupils with learning difficulties. There is a privately run nursery on site and the school operates a breakfast and homework club before and after school respectively. The majority of pupils are White British while the largest minority ethnic group is of Nepalese heritage. Mobility of pupils is high owing to the school serving the children of a local barracks of the armed forces. There has been a very high turnover of teaching staff in the last few years. The school has recently received Healthy Schools status.

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 an improving school whose effectiveness is satisfactory. Since her appointment just over a year ago the headteacher has introduced a rigorous programme of monitoring teaching, which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Ably supported by her deputy headteacher, she has recently introduced a good tracking system to check on pupils' progress. It is not yet being used fully by all teachers, many of whom are new to the school, to enable them to set realistic but challenging targets for their pupils. These and other actions demonstrate an adequate appreciation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a satisfactory capacity to improve. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. While the headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership most of the main subject leaders are relatively new to their roles, but are becoming more effective as they grow in confidence and experience. The chair of governors leads the governing body well and liaises well with the school. As a result of the measures introduced, the quality of teaching has improved significantly, with much of it now of good quality which is having a positive effect on driving up standards in English, mathematics and science. However, such improvements have not been in place long enough for the benefits to be fully felt, for example to recover all the ground lost over previous years caused by inadequate teaching. Although standards are improving they are, therefore, still below average in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. While the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, teachers' planning does not consistently ensure that the work set is matched adequately to the needs of all the pupils, particularly the more able. However, pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory. The care and support given to pupils are good while their academic guidance is satisfactory. In the Reception, where teaching and learning are good, children enjoy a well-planned range of activities, with good levels of adult support focused on developing their communication and social skills. In the rest of the school, the satisfactory curriculum covers all the required areas. Previous gaps in parts of the curriculum, such as investigative work in science that contributed to low standards, are now covered. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good as a result of the high value placed on these areas. Pupils are happy to come to school because they enjoy their lessons and are very enthusiastic about all the other activities the school has to offer. As a result, attendance has now improved and is in line with the national average. Behaviour is good despite there being some pupils with emotional difficulties, who, when coming to school, struggle to adapt to an orderly and structured environment. Pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe. They are all very confident that any problems they have will be dealt with well. They say that teachers and other adults 'give very, very good advice'. They have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and like the vegetable and meat options which 'are good for different diets and religions'. They relish the many opportunities they have to take exercise and keep fit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' planning is closely matched to the needs of all groups of pupils, including the higher attainers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and progress are satisfactory by the time pupils leave Year 6. When children join the school in the Reception their abilities are very low. Although they make good progress and

achieve well, their attainment is still below average by the time they enter Year 1. The results of the national assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2006 were below average in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. Current standards are improving and achievement in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. The results of the 2006 tests for eleven-year-olds were below average in English, and were exceptionally low in mathematics and science. In the present Year 6, although pupils are making satisfactory progress and good progress in science, most are working at below average standards. This, however, is an improving picture in line with improvements in the quality of teaching. Pupils with learning difficulties receive adequate support and make satisfactory progress. Pupils learning English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress. More able pupils do not consistently make the progress expected of them, as teaching does not always challenge them. With the improvements being made, pupils' developing skills in literacy and numeracy prepare them adequately for the next stage of their education and beyond.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' social skills improve as they move through the school and show an increasing awareness of others and their needs. Those pupils who find it hard to behave, often for emotional reasons, are supported and counselled well. Pupils are fascinated to learn about other cultures and say that the school helps them to feel proud of their different backgrounds. Last summer saw a number of successful activities to explore both the Hindu religion and Nepalese culture. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and make a good contribution to the life of the school and the community. Those who undertake extra responsibilities, such as being members of the school council, running the fruit tuck shop or acting as playleaders, take their roles very seriously and want to do their best for the school. All the pupils are willing to fundraise for charities such as Comic Relief and understand how they can help others. Pupils' well-developed social skills prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The improvements to the quality of teaching are beginning to bear fruit. However, this improved quality has not been in place long enough to have fully made up the lost ground in standards. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes well. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to help pupils learn effectively. Although teachers all take care in planning their lessons, they do not consistently ensure that the work they set is matched well enough to the full range of ability in the class. The lack of sufficient challenge for more able pupils has especially been the case in the teaching of science which has held back pupils' learning. The quality of teachers' marking is variable, but is generally helpful in showing pupils how to improve their work. Good links are often made with how well pupils have understood what it is they are learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's satisfactory curriculum now includes a strong focus on developing pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy, so that pupils of all abilities can make better progress in these areas. In science, where previously there were gaps, the curriculum has improved. Some creative links have been developed across the curriculum and pupils talk of how much they enjoy this, for example in studying history and English together in their work on the Tudors. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good, covering all areas of learning fully and providing for a wide range of enjoyable experiences for the children. A good range of extra activities, visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. Pupils are full of enthusiasm about all the clubs on offer, including the homework club which, one pupil said, 'really helps me'. They say that the trips are 'fantastic' and one commented that a day out in London was 'one of the best days of our lives'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils benefit greatly from the good care and support in the school. Pastoral care is particularly good. Child protection and vetting procedures are robust and as a result vulnerable pupils are well supported. The family liaison officer and the learning mentor are readily available to counsel all pupils who are aware of and value this support. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for those learning English as an additional language enables them to make satisfactory progress towards their targets. The employment of a Nepalese teaching assistant helps in that respect. The nurture group provides good support for the minority of pupils who have difficulty behaving well in class. The school works hard with families to ensure that pupils come to school regularly and on time. The introduction of a breakfast club and the support of the family liaison officer have helped to improve attendance and the punctuality of some pupils. Pupils new to the school are supported well and quickly made to feel welcome. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory. There are now good, new systems for tracking the progress of individuals and year groups, but these have not yet had time to have made a full impact on raising standards. Pupils say they find it helpful to be given targets and are developing a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher leads and manages the school well and is capably supported by the deputy headteacher. They have successfully engendered a good team spirit and high morale among the staff. They are fully committed to improving pupils' standards and achievement and realise that the key to this is to improve the quality of provision, particularly teaching. In this, they have been successful through judicious staff appointments and rigorous monitoring. The main subject leaders are relatively new to their posts, committed to developing their roles and are keen to gain further experience and training. Currently, they give satisfactory support to the leadership team. The governors, led well by the chair, are becoming increasingly involved in the daily life of the school. Evidence of the way weaknesses have been tackled by the school includes the complete overhaul of outdated ICT provision. In addition, successful steps have been taken to involve parents more in the life of

the school and to listen to their views. A greater sense of optimism is wisely accompanied by a realisation that improvements made are only part of a much longer process to raise standards further. A changing environment is providing a sound basis for that to happen.

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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?	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	3
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?	3

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?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- Thank you very much for all the help you gave to the inspectors when they came to your school recently. We liked talking to you and to your teachers and coming to your school assembly. We also enjoyed the activities going on for Red Nose Day. The education and teaching you receive are satisfactory and things are getting better. These are the things we liked most about your school
- When you first come to school in the Reception class, you make a good start to your education and do well, and you make satisfactory progress after that.
- The standards of your work are improving in English, mathematics and science, although they are still below average by the end of Year 6.
- You enjoy school, and most of you attend regularly.
- Your headteacher, who leads the school well, makes sure that those of you who need extra help get it.
- You told us you feel safe and you are given good care and support and sound levels of guidance.
- Most of you behave and get on well with each other and with all members of staff.
- You understand the importance of exercise and eating healthily. These are the things that we think could be better
- We have asked the school to make sure that when teachers set you work it is at the right level to help you make good progress, including for those who find some of the work too easy. We really enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn and wish you all well for the future.