

Halstead Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118274
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312862
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacque Buttriss

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Crighton
Headteacher	Beverley Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Otford Lane Halstead Sevenoaks TN14 7EA
Telephone number	01959 532224
Fax number	01959 532224

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Inspection number	312862

© Crown copyright 2008

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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small rural primary school. Some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' mobility is higher than average. A number of Gypsy/Roma and traveller children attend the school. There is a privately run nursery within the school building.

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 school which provides a sound education for its pupils. Standards are broadly average and most pupils make satisfactory progress. In the older classes, work is usually well matched to pupils' needs, with the result that they are appropriately challenged and motivated to make good progress in some subjects. However, some teachers of younger classes have insufficiently high expectations of what pupils can do, so that there is not enough challenge and pupils' progress slows. There is also some underachievement amongst the girls through the school. Boys greatly outperformed girls in the 2007 national tests in both Year 2 and Year 6.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep healthy. They enjoy school. 'It's really friendly here,' said a Year 6 boy. Despite the school's work to improve it, attendance is below average because of the high absence rate of a few pupils. Behaviour is usually good, although there is some low-level disaffection amongst some of the boys. There is an active school council and, as one parent put it, 'children are encouraged to offer their views'. Pupils contribute effectively to their community.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and teachers work hard to make lessons enjoyable for learners. 'Lessons are great,' said one Year 2 girl. The curriculum provision is also satisfactory but a good variety of activities and clubs enriches the curriculum well. Whilst the curriculum is effectively adapted to the needs and interests of boys, it is less motivating for girls, with the result that they become less engaged in their work. The provision for children in the Reception class is satisfactory overall, but the arrangement of activities in the classroom limits learning opportunities through imaginative play.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pastoral care and support are good, but academic guidance is underdeveloped. Pupils do not all know their individual learning targets and teachers' marking does not help pupils know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders set appropriate direction to support school improvement. However, self-evaluation processes are not as thorough as they could be and some subject leaders' roles are at an early stage of development. Governors provide effective support to the school.

Parents are strongly supportive of the school and appreciate the hard work put in by staff. 'We are very happy with the school,' is a typical comment.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage provides a sound start to pupils' school life. Satisfactory teaching enables children to settle into the Reception class well and enjoy their learning. Relationships are good and children behave well. They are helped to feel secure and to gain appropriate confidence. Children are kept sitting on the carpet too long during whole-class sessions, however, and they begin to lose interest. More opportunities to be active in their learning and to make their own choices would help to motivate and engage children and develop their skills more effectively. The teaching assistant provides good support for children at the earlier stages of learning. The Reception curriculum provides an appropriate framework for learning. However, the classroom is not arranged in as varied and imaginative a way as it could be to stimulate all children's

interest. In particular, role-play areas lack excitement and there are too few options available to children for creative play. The outdoor learning environment is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of what younger pupils can do in order to help them all to achieve as well as they can.
- Analyse and address the reasons why boys outperform girls.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Reception class by creating a more stimulating learning environment and making a greater variety of classroom activities available.
- Ensure that all parents understand the importance of making sure that their children always attend school every day.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the Reception class with standards below those expected. They make satisfactory progress to join Year 1 with below average standards. However, there is some underachievement in Key Stage 1, with the result that pupils' standards by the end of Year 2 are well below the national average. Older pupils make good progress in mathematics and science and satisfactory progress in English, so that by the time they reach the end of Year 6 they attain average standards overall. Older pupils' progress in writing has started to improve. In the 2007 national tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils, boys greatly outperformed girls in both age groups and in all subjects. The older more able learners are well challenged to fulfil their potential. However, a few pupils agreed with one Year 4 boy's comment that 'I think I could work harder.' Gypsy/Roma pupils make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities currently make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Their spiritual development is good and their cultural awareness has been enhanced enjoyably through events such as the recent Traveller Culture Day, during which a traditional Gypsy/Roma wagon was the centre of a variety of creative activities. Pupils value and care for each other and develop a good sense of right and wrong. Although most have good social skills and cooperate well, a few boys sometimes respond brusquely to their peers and to adults. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory and pupils enjoy coming to school. 'I like learning,' said a Year 4 girl. However, attendance rates are below average and a few pupils have very high absence rates. This is because those few families do not fulfil the legal requirements to ensure their children's regular and punctual attendance at school. Pupils say they feel safe and that the infrequent incidents of bullying are quickly resolved. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils understand the need to stay healthy, happily discussing the benefits of eating healthy foods, yet many of them have crisps in their lunchboxes.

The active school council meets regularly and is closely involved in projects to enhance the school environment, such as playground improvements. Older pupils take on specific

responsibilities to chair and officiate at meetings. Pupils make an effective contribution to their wider community through participating in local activities and they enjoy local walks. They acquire satisfactory skills to prepare them for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers' satisfactory planning provides an effective framework to support teaching and learning. Most teachers ensure that an appropriate degree of challenge meets the learning needs of pupils with different abilities, particularly in the mixed-age classes. In some lessons, teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with the result that these learners are able to make steady progress. However, in some classes, support staff are not actively used to observe and assess pupils' responses during whole-class sessions. Behaviour in lessons is generally good. However, there appears to be some slight disaffection amongst older boys, whose attitude is occasionally dismissive. As a result, girls seem to become more inhibited so that they are reticent to contribute and therefore become less engaged in their learning. In some younger classes, teachers do not have high expectations of what pupils can do, with the result that learners do not work as hard as they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a good variety of additional activities, visits and visitors. A good programme of personal, social and health education encourages healthy lifestyles and contributes effectively to pupils' development as responsible citizens. However, whilst the curriculum provides relevant and enjoyable learning experiences that are particularly relevant to boys, some adaptation of the curriculum is needed to appeal more effectively to the interests of girls. Greater variety of activities and a more stimulating curriculum could be provided for some of the younger pupils to involve them in more active learning. Good access to computers helps pupils to enjoy an increasingly varied information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum which is being used effectively to support pupils' learning in other subjects. Various support groups are organised to ensure access to learning for pupils of all abilities in literacy and numeracy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good pastoral care is a strength of the school, contributing to pupils' welfare, their enjoyment of school and their satisfactory personal development. Children joining the Reception class have a smooth transition into school life. Pupils joining other year groups settle quickly and happily into school routines. Older pupils are well prepared and confident about transferring to secondary school. The school has an active partnership with parents and carers. Effective links with outside agencies ensure that all pupils and their families are well supported. The school is taking appropriate actions to try to improve attendance, with outside support, although this is not yet having the desired effect. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Any vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are quickly identified and effectively supported. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not give learners sufficient information on how well they are doing and what they need to do to

improve. Most pupils know they have learning targets, but many cannot recall what they are, so they do not provide as much impetus as they could for raising standards

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. Standards have been successfully raised in both mathematics and science. Writing is a current focus for development and pupils are now making good progress in writing. There is a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. The majority of teachers are newly qualified and in their first year of teaching, so subject leadership is at an early stage of development. The core subjects are satisfactorily led by more experienced members of staff. There is good and accurate monitoring of the quality of teaching. The school's self-evaluation form is sparse and parts of it are out of date. However, there is robust tracking of pupils' progress and the school's strategic development plan includes most of the school's major development needs. It provides a sound basis for improvement in the identified priority areas. Leaders set satisfactorily challenging targets to raise standards. Minority groups, such as the Gypsy/Roma pupils, are well integrated and have good access to the curriculum. However, equality of opportunity is not sufficiently rigorous to eliminate pockets of underachievement in the school, principally amongst younger pupils. Resources are appropriately deployed to give sound value for money. Governors are supportive and carry out their responsibilities with dedication. They are gradually developing the effectiveness of their monitoring roles.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

28 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Halstead Community Primary School, Halstead, TN14 7EA

Thank you for being friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school. You made us feel welcome and we enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a satisfactory school that helps you to make steady progress and cares for you well.

- There are the things we especially like about your school:
- The teachers and teaching assistants work hard to take good care of you and support you well.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- You are making good progress in your writing. Well done!
- There are good arrangements to help you settle into the school and you are confident about moving on to secondary school.
- You enjoy coming to school.
- Your teachers organise interesting activities to help you learn.
- You have a good variety of after school clubs and activities.
- Your school council helps to make good improvements to your surroundings.
- Your parents and carers are happy with the school.
- These are the things we think your school could do better:
- Teachers could expect some of the younger pupils to work harder to help them make more progress.
- Boys reached higher standards than girls in the SATs last year, so the school could find out why this was so and help girls to make at least as much progress as boys. You girls could help by taking a more active part in your lessons.
- The staff could improve teaching and learning in the Reception classroom by making it a more exciting place, with more choices of activities to help children learn more actively.
- You could help the school to make sure that all your parents and carers understand how important it is that you always attend school every day.

Keep up your enjoyment of school and work hard to achieve as well as you can. I would like to wish you lots of success in your future education. Yours sincerely

Jacquie Buttriss Lead inspector

Annex B

28 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Halstead Community Primary School, Halstead, TN14 7EA

Thank you for being friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school. You made us feel welcome and we enjoyed talking with you. Yours is a satisfactory school that helps you to make steady progress and cares for you well.

There are the things we especially like about your school:

- The teachers and teaching assistants work hard to take good care of you and support you well.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- You are making good progress in your writing. Well done!
- There are good arrangements to help you settle into the school and you are confident about moving on to secondary school.
- You enjoy coming to school.
- Your teachers organise interesting activities to help you learn.
- You have a good variety of after school clubs and activities.
- Your school council helps to make good improvements to your surroundings.
- Your parents and carers are happy with the school.

These are the things we think your school could do better:

- Teachers could expect some of the younger pupils to work harder to help them make more progress.
- Boys reached higher standards than girls in the SATs last year, so the school could find out why this was so and help girls to make at least as much progress as boys. You girls could help by taking a more active part in your lessons.
- The staff could improve teaching and learning in the Reception classroom by making it a more exciting place, with more choices of activities to help children learn more actively.
- You could help the school to make sure that all your parents and carers understand how important it is that you always attend school every day.

Keep up your enjoyment of school and work hard to achieve as well as you can. I would like to wish you lots of success in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Jacquie Buttriss
Lead inspector