

Halling Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118326
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	312888
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Missin

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	246
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Simpson
Headteacher	Ian Stuart
Date of previous school inspection	4 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Howlsmere Close Halling Rochester ME2 1ER
Telephone number	01634 240258
Fax number	01634 241552

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Halling Primary School is about the same size as most primary schools. Attainment on first admission has been improving recently to levels that are now broadly in line with those expected. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of educational need, is broadly average. A below average proportion are eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils have White British heritage and very few are at an early stage of learning English. The school has received a bronze eco school award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Halling Primary School is providing a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It has a number of strengths which are appreciated by parents and a number of aspects where improvement is required. This is a caring school where staff know all the pupils and their families well and where there are secure procedures for supporting and encouraging those who may be vulnerable or in need. This ensures that all pupils have access to all that the school provides. Parents value the care and concern shown by the school. One commented, 'I have been very impressed with the help and support that the school has provided for my child. This school has a very good understanding of the needs of individual children.' Pupils' personal development is promoted well. Pupils say how much they enjoy what the school provides and most are very keen to attend. Attendance rates are consistently above the national average. Pupils' behaviour in class and at break times is good and the relationships evident in the school community are very positive. Pupils have a mature understanding of how to pursue healthy lifestyles and the importance of minimising any risks. They are keen to take responsibility in the school and they understand the difference between right and wrong. Their support of a school in The Gambia helps them appreciate children less well off than themselves living in a different culture.

Standards in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. In Year 6, pupils are reaching average standards in English but standards in mathematics are just below and in science they are well below average. The satisfactory teaching in the school leads to satisfactory learning and overall achievement. There are strengths in teaching but the overall quality is not good enough to secure significantly better progress by pupils. Teachers mostly manage pupils well and work hard to create attractive, welcoming classrooms. However, lesson planning is often too brief and does not make sufficient reference to the specific focus of pupils' learning or to activities that are matched closely to pupils' different abilities. Assessment data are not yet being used precisely enough to ensure that pupils make the progress they could. Procedures are established well in some classes, but there is not enough consistency across the school for these to be fully effective. The satisfactory curriculum is made relevant and interesting through the excellent use of the attractive outdoor area and through imaginative visits, visitors and a wide range of additional clubs. However, provision, particularly in mathematics and science, is not effective in ensuring that all pupils make the best possible progress in their learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Several important priorities have been identified in school improvement planning and the new 'priority teams' have secured the commitment of all staff and placed school improvement issues at the centre of its work. However, the drive to raise standards is not sufficiently explicit in planning for school improvement. Governors support and challenge the school satisfactorily. The school is moving forward and has a satisfactory capacity to make further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) get a good start to their time at school and their achievement is good. They begin school with standards that are expected for their age. In 2008, standards at the beginning of Year 1 were well above those expected nationally; those in other years have not been as high. Strengths are in the effective teaching and the interesting and challenging curriculum which is provided. There is a good balance between teacher-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. There is a good link

between learning in the classroom and in the outside area. Activities are usually well planned to meet the interests of the children and provide good support in developing their decision-making skills. However, sometimes activities do not always ensure that all children are learning at the most appropriate level. Children's personal development is promoted well. Adults have quiet, effective strategies to encourage positive behaviour and social skills, and these result in happy, confident children who are prepared to try hard with new skills. Staff are effective in the way they encourage children to play and work together cooperatively. The care and welfare of all children is given a high priority. Good relationships with parents and pre-school providers ensure that children settle quickly and enjoy their early experiences of school life. Many support the view of one parent who stated, 'The school provided an excellent start to my child's education.' There is insufficient use of available assessment data to analyse overall trends and the school is working to complete the few elements of the new EYFS Framework that have not yet been implemented.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make the priority of raising standards and accelerating progress, especially in mathematics and science, more explicit in school improvement planning.
- Improve the quality of teaching and ensure that teachers plan work that is more consistently matched to the different abilities of the pupils in their classes.
- Establish a consistent approach to assessing what pupils know and can do and use assessment data more sharply to set challenging improvement targets.

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

Standards in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been mostly below average. They were closer to average in 2008, when they were highest in reading. In all assessed subjects, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was just above the national average. In Year 6, standards are average in English, slightly below average in mathematics and well below average in science. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 is below the national average. Across the school, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory overall progress in their learning. Pupils make better progress in aspects of language than in mathematics and science. Work on display shows that pupils reach good standards in art and design and design and technology by the time they leave the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good attitudes to school and the majority are proud of the contribution they make to it as a positive, caring community. Pupils accept additional responsibilities willingly and with great maturity. They are polite, helpful and confident speakers, and are good ambassadors for the school. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy. This is promoted very effectively by the opportunity they have to grow fruit and vegetables in their own garden plots and to supply each other, parents and the school kitchen. They know what actions they can take to keep themselves safe, even outside the school. However, older pupils receive insufficient guidance on how to use the internet safely outside school. The link with a school in The Gambia

provides them with a good understanding of other cultures and lifestyles, and all members of the school staff help in developing pupils' abilities to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils evidently enjoy coming to school and most do so willingly, regularly and punctually. Attendance rates are consistently above the national average. Pupils' acquisition of basic skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education and future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage pupils well and they expect and achieve a good response from them. Most pupils behave well, and are keen to do their best. Relationships are good. Teachers work effectively with their assistants who contribute well to pupils' learning. Teachers work hard to create attractive classrooms where pupils' work is valued and attractively displayed. When teachers devise activities that are interesting and challenging, pupils are committed to their work, enjoy themselves and learn well. However, teachers' lesson planning is sometimes too brief and does not consistently show work that is carefully matched to the different abilities of pupils in the class. Plans do not consistently make clear reference to the specific skills which pupils are expected to acquire in each lesson. Procedures for assessing what pupils know and can do are not consistent across the school. Pupils who need extra help get sound support and achieve their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Communication skills, particularly speech and language, are promoted well and this is helping to raise standards in literacy. However, overall provision is not yet fully effective in ensuring that pupils consistently make good enough progress in mathematics and science. Pupils' personal skills are developed well. Pupils get appropriate opportunity to take part in physical activities in lessons, after school and at break times. The curriculum is made interesting and relevant by additional opportunities through music tuition and by the teaching of French. A good number of after school clubs, interesting visits and visitors help to make learning fun for the pupils and there are good links with the local community. Very good use is made of the school's excellent outdoor provision, which includes an outdoor classroom, a pond and several wooded environmental areas. Current initiatives include introducing a more creative curriculum to strengthen links between different curriculum subjects and grouping pupils by ability in literacy and numeracy in Year 1. However, there has been insufficient planned use of clear success criteria to enable the school to judge the effectiveness of enhancements and these recent changes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care and welfare of all pupils is an important priority. The headteacher and other staff know pupils and their families very well and parents are overwhelmingly confident about the way the school looks after its pupils. Pupils who are in need or who require extra help are identified effectively and appropriate support and encouragement are provided to enable them to thrive. All safeguarding requirements are met. The attention given to pupils who have had minor accidents at school is very good indeed. There are good links with outside agencies.

Procedures to secure good attendance are very effective. Procedures to support pupils' academic progress are only satisfactory because they are too inconsistent across all classes. Sometimes the marking of pupils' work provides clear pointers to improvement and sometimes pupils' progress is carefully tracked and monitored, but the inconsistency across the school makes overall procedures ineffective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Several important school improvement priorities have been developed well. The recent focus on language and communication, particularly guided reading, has been effective in improving standards. The vision to extend and develop the outside environment of the school and to focus on outdoor learning has been implemented exceptionally well. This is now a strong feature of the school's work. The headteacher has recently established priority teams to focus efforts more clearly on school improvement priorities and this has successfully involved staff more widely in improvement processes and ensured that school improvement issues are the centre of its work. There are clear links between improvement priorities and staff's professional development. However, an important weakness is that the priority to raise standards and to accelerate the progress of pupils is not sufficiently explicit. Management systems are clear and well organised and as a result the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Governors support and encourage the school well but do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of information on national test results to give them the confidence to ask more challenging questions about how well the school is doing. Evaluation procedures are not always rigorous enough and in some areas the school's view of itself has been overly positive.

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Annex A

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
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Halling Primary School, Rochester, ME2 1ER

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome when we came to the school recently to see how well you were doing.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school.

- Children in the Reception class settle quickly and make a good start to their time at school.
- Your school is very attractive. We especially liked all those things to do in the outdoor areas.
- You all enjoy what the school provides and come to school regularly.
- Your teachers and other adults know you and your families well and you are all well looked after.
- We were impressed with the enthusiasm you showed about your vegetable plots and how this is helping your understanding of healthy lifestyles.

There are some things that we thought could be better.

- School leaders need to focus more clearly on helping you all to do better and make more progress, especially in mathematics and science.
- Teachers need to plan class work which is better matched to what you can all do and to use assessment information to set targets, which will help you do even better.

Thank you again for your welcome. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Missin

Lead inspector