

Hunton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118726
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313065
Inspection date	6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	70
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	8
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacqui White
Headteacher	Sue Wood
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bishops Lane Hunton Maidstone ME15 0SJ

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	6 November 2008
Inspection number	313065

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. A number of children come from some distance, often because parents choose the school because of its small size and the relatively low number of pupils in each class. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, with a few pupils having significant learning difficulties. Although the majority of children join the school in Reception, the last part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), a higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school in other year groups. About a tenth of pupils are from traveller backgrounds of Gypsy Roma or Irish heritage. The school runs a breakfast club three days a week. Recent awards gained by the school include the Healthy School, Platinum Travel, Eco-School and International Green Flag awards. The headteacher has taken up her post since the last inspection, following an extended period when the school was under the leadership of an acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hunton Church of England Primary School is a good school. It has improved well since the last inspection and now has some outstanding features. The excellent care, guidance and support very successfully promote pupils' personal development and well-being, which is outstanding. Children are articulate and confident, and are exceptionally appreciative of all that the school offers. Parents are also overwhelmingly positive in their responses, reflected in the comment made by one parent, 'Teachers take very good care of children. You could not want any more of a primary school.'

Good gains since the last inspection have been made in the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum, provision for information and communication technology (ICT), resources and rate of attendance, which are all good. Such developments, together with successful strategies to improve literacy, numeracy and science, have led to better standards and achievement.

Children in the EYFS get off to a good start and quickly develop a love of school and learning. They develop warm relationships with one another and with adults, helping them to make good progress. Throughout the school, learning themes, such as 'The Rain Forest', make learning interesting and fun, so that pupils achieve well. Pupils generally reach average standards in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Good levels of ICT skill, along with very relevant practical experiences, contribute effectively to their preparation for their future economic well-being. However, the school is aware there is more to be done to raise attainment further, especially in writing and to make further gains in the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in all subjects by the end of Years 2 and 6.

As parents recognise, the school is well led and managed. It is not complacent and is forward looking. One parent observed, for example, that 'The headteacher has instigated many changes which have had a wholly positive outcome for the school.' Staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development and have appropriate plans in place to ensure the school's continuing success. The school's good track record of recent development and its accurate self-evaluation show that it is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The parents of children in the Reception class are very positive about how the very welcoming and friendly atmosphere helps their children to settle in quickly. One comment summarises their views, 'My son loves school so much that he wants to be there at weekends.' Children run into school, talking enthusiastically about the things they do. Children's needs are assessed very carefully. The school's early assessments show a wide variety of attainment, with many below, and a few well below, the level expected for children's ages. Good teaching and a well-planned and exciting curriculum ensure that children quickly gain confidence and learn from a rich range of first-hand experiences. They make good progress across all the areas of learning because of the personal attention they receive. For example, adult guidance supported imaginative play very well in the class role-play 'café', extending children's understanding of the world around them. The phonics programme is proving very successful. Children show considerable success in developing their literacy skills, for example, in 'beating the teacher' when writing letters that correspond to the initial sounds of the names of a series of objects.

Children learn to socialise well with others in activities, such as when older pupils read to them, and through some joint activities with Year 1 pupils. The outdoor area gives children good access to a wide range of outside activities. Skilled staff use the available space well, but conditions are cramped and time has to be spent setting up and putting away activities in the school hall so that it can be used by others. The new classroom to be built over the next year should improve provision greatly.

What the school should do to improve further

- embed the approaches to literacy to improve standards in writing
- help more pupils to reach the higher levels for their age in all subjects by the end of Years 2 and 6.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards vary from year to year because numbers are small and pupils in each group have differing abilities and needs. As pupils move through the school, they steadily close the gap between their standards and the national average, so that standards in Year 6 are generally around the national average. This represents good achievement when taking account of the below average starting points of many pupils. Pupils' performance in 2008 exceeded the targets set for them. Changes to the teaching of reading and a problem-solving approach to mathematics are successfully improving standards in these areas. Staff are bringing the same rigour and determination to the teaching of writing and standards are rising, but are not yet as high as in reading. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress, but the school recognises that a below average proportion of pupils reach the higher levels when assessed at the end of Years 2 and 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attitudes and behaviour. They say bullying is rare and that adults deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Pupils have an exceptional understanding of how to stay safe. Outstanding gains in their spiritual, moral and social development, together with good progress in cultural understanding, enable pupils to appreciate the achievements of others and to show care and consideration. The school has successfully raised attendance levels, which are now a little above the national average. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and local communities. They take responsibility seriously, for example when acting as prefects, play leaders and 'buddies' for younger children. The school council makes a good contribution to school life and, along with circle time and a 'pupil voice' box, ensures that pupils' views are well represented. Raising money for charities gives pupils a good understanding of wider social and economic issues. As one pupil commented, 'It helps us appreciate just how lucky we are.' Such activities, together with an effective focus on basic skills and many opportunities to work in groups, lay a firm foundation for the next stages of pupils' education and their future working lives. Work leading to gaining 'Healthy School' status, including growing vegetables to be cooked in school, as well as the much enjoyed 'Skip 2B fit' and 'Huff and Puff' programmes, give pupils a good understanding of the need for exercise and healthy eating.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching successfully motivates pupils to learn well and pupils strive to live up to the high expectations that adults have of them, shown, for example, in the presentation of their work. Lessons are well planned and objectives are shared with and explained to pupils so that they are clear about the purpose of activities and what they are aiming to achieve. Work is matched well to pupils' individual needs and good personal attention means that pupils understand their progress towards their targets. Teachers question pupils well individually and in groups to deepen their understanding of their tasks. Effective use of interactive whiteboards makes learning interesting and stimulating. Lessons are usually conducted at a good pace, but this is not consistently the case and sometimes learning slows down. Marking gives pupils positive feedback about their work and successfully values their efforts, usually helping them to understand how to improve the quality of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and interesting, and meets the needs of all learners. A good emphasis is placed on teaching and using basic skills in English and mathematics. The school is continuing its drive to improve standards with an ongoing focus on phonics, spelling and writing in literacy, and problem solving and mental activities in numeracy. Such strategies, along with the introduction of the local authority scheme for science, have already had a positive impact on pupils' performance. Nevertheless, the school recognises the importance of maintaining a relentless focus on writing standards in particular and of further embedding its strategies for this. Teachers are making an increasing number of purposeful links between subjects to enhance creativity and pupils' enjoyment in learning. For example, as part of their work in geography, pupils in Years 5 and 6 designed, made and played board games based on a convict's journey from England to Australia. Provision has improved through the recent introduction of French for pupils in Years 3 to 6. There is good enrichment of daily lessons through a range of visits, visitors and 'themed events' such as multi-cultural weeks, together with many after school clubs, including gardening, dance and board games.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' well-being is promoted highly effectively and the school's Christian ethos gives tremendous support to this. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Parents of pupils who have joined the school recently particularly appreciate the induction arrangements. For example, one parent commented, 'Staff have made a great effort to welcome my daughter and meet with us to ensure that she is settling in.' Another praised the school's commitment to personal development, 'Staff are wonderful and consistently nurture our children's education and well-being with both enthusiasm and care.' A very comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, supported by residential trips, gives pupils a good understanding of the need for safe and healthy lifestyles. To improve provision even further, the school has recently introduced a scheme to enhance social and emotional aspects of pupils' learning. The strong partnerships with external agencies ensure very effective provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who travel with their families. Pupils' progress

is tracked regularly and the information gained is used to set challenging targets for their academic achievement. Regular and positive feedback through marking helps pupils to know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. As such, the commitment to improvement and achieving the school's aims is a shared one. As one parent wrote, 'The school has an excellent ethos which all staff follow and believe in.' With good support from staff and governors, the headteacher has established a very caring, inclusive and supportive learning environment and improved the quality of communication between parents and school. Together with the strong involvement of pupils in the community, shows the school's good contribution to community cohesion. The headteacher's clear vision for moving the school on has resulted in improved systems to monitor all aspects of the school's performance, for example, effective procedures to monitor and track pupils' progress. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Planning for improvement is thorough and the school development plan, although not sufficiently costed, is an effective tool to move the school forward. To support this, the school is developing the expertise of all subject leaders to enable them to play a full part in managing the subjects for which they are responsible and thereby help the school make further gains. Governors are very supportive of the school. They play a full part in strategic and financial planning and are purposeful in their role as 'critical friends' in challenging the school to do its best for all in its care. The school has good capacity to make further improvement.

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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?	2
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	2

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	1

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	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

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

7 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Hunton CE Primary School, Maidstone, ME15 0SJ

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited recently to see how you are getting on at school. I would like to thank the school council for giving up part of their lunchtime to talk to us.

We agree with you that you are fortunate to go to such a good school. These are some of the things that we have found out about your school:

- You have excellent attitudes to school and your work. You enjoy school very much and take good advantage of everything the school offers.
- Your outstanding behaviour means that the school is a very happy place.
- You take care and show pride in your work and this helps you to do well.
- The school council represents you well in letting adults know what pupils think and how you want to improve the school further.
- You know what to do to stay safe, and take part in a good range of activities to keep fit and healthy.
- The headteacher and the staff think very carefully about how well the school is doing and are making improvements to make learning more enjoyable and to help you do even better.

We agree with your teachers about the most important things to do next:

- To continue to find ways to help you to improve your writing.
- To build on the good progress you are making to help more of you to reach the higher levels in the national tests.
- You can help them by making sure that you understand what you have to do next to improve your writing.

Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires. It was very helpful to hear what they think about the school. We wish everyone at Hunton School every success in the future.

Yours sincerely Helen Hutchings Lead inspector