

Horton Kirby Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118861
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313124
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Julie Sackett

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	282
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hood
Headteacher	Martin Say
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Horton Road Horton Kirby Dartford DA4 9BN
Telephone number	01322 863278
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In this larger than average school most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The school has recently gained Healthy School status. It is currently working towards gaining a nationally recognised Sportsmark.

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. The vast majority of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire are supportive of the school. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'My daughter says how much she enjoys her new school because she feels she learns more and the lessons are fun.' The school is a harmonious community where pupils do well. The headteacher has developed a strong team approach which supports the school's actions for improvement.

Pupils start school with knowledge and skills that are broadly expected for their age and they do well in their Reception Year, where provision is good. By the time they leave in Year 6, standards are above average. The standards reached in English are not quite as high as pupils do not always write with enough accuracy in their spelling or present their work to best effect. Overall, pupils' progress is good because of a strong emphasis on basic skills, including reading and number calculation work.

Good teaching combined with a good curriculum ensure that pupils generally achieve well. The quality of relationships developed between adults and pupils is a particular strength and contributes well to the progress pupils make. In the best practice, lessons are interesting and teaching styles capture the interest of pupils whilst maintaining a calm and purposeful atmosphere. However, at times, pupils are required to sit passively for too long and this limits their potential progress. Pupils are beginning to work with their teachers to evaluate and comment on their own learning. However, feedback to the pupils on how to improve their work is not always thorough enough to ensure more rapid improvement. Pupils gain good first-hand experiences through regular trips to places of interest such as a cathedral and local children's farms.

As the pupils' moral and social development is effective, their personal development is good. This results in the outstanding behaviour of pupils and their excellent relationships with staff and other pupils in and around the school. Pupils are very polite and courteous towards each other and towards adults. There are some good examples of spiritual and cultural development, such as opportunities to consider the impact of natural disasters and current affairs. However, their understanding and awareness of different faiths, cultures and lifestyles is a weaker aspect of their personal development. Assemblies and close links with the church and local organisations contribute well to pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Good leadership and management underpin the school's development and direction. School leaders have accurately identified areas requiring improvement and have introduced initiatives to remedy weaknesses with some success. Given the school's track record of success, the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a good start to school where they settle in quickly to the routines set for them. Good links with local playgroups help make the process as smooth as possible. Teaching is typically good within the Reception classes. A good focus on developing children's language and number skills ensures they make good progress and develop early reading skills. They are confident speaking to adults and relate very well to each other because their social development is very good. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children so they develop their independent skills well. Children make good use of the

wide range of equipment outside. Adults supervise these activities well, although sometimes children's imagination or sense of further inquiry is not always extended fully by skilful questioning or guidance. Others enjoy role-play areas which help children to use their imagination. Several enjoyed visiting the class vets with their sick animals. The good provision means that, while the vast majority reach average levels, many reach above average levels, particularly in social and mathematical development. The Foundation Stage is well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Give pupils more guidance to improve the accuracy of their spelling and presentation skills to raise the quality of their writing.
- Ensure that marking and the process of setting targets gives pupils more specific guidance about the next steps in their learning.
- Extend existing provision within the curriculum to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of different faiths and cultures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well from their starting points and reach above average standards. Children in Reception make good progress, particularly in their social, emotional and communication and mathematical skills. Pupils make good progress through to Year 6, although this is sometimes uneven between classes due to some variations in the teaching. By the time they leave, pupils reach above average standards in science and well above average in mathematics. Standards in English, while above average in reading, do not fully match the levels of other subjects, as pupils' writing is a relatively weaker aspect of their work. Pupils use computers well to reach standards higher than expected, such as the newspaper reports completed by Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well and they keep pace with their classmates because their needs are identified early and addressed well, often with the support of well trained class assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils of all ages show a genuine respect for each other and all adults in the school. Good attendance and punctuality reflect their enjoyment of school. One parent said, 'My son has been happy throughout his time here and is happy to go to school every day.' Personal development and well-being are good, rather than outstanding as the school judged, because some pupils are not fully aware of the differences in backgrounds and beliefs represented in the wider community beyond school. Pupils' moral and social development is good and, as a result, their behaviour is consistently of a very high standard. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep fit, healthy and safe. Older pupils take on a range of responsibilities such as lunchtime servers for the younger children in a mature manner that contributes to the family ethos of the school. Pupils make good contributions to local and wider communities such as the organisation and running of stalls to raise money during Christian Aid Week. Their mature social skills and good academic skills prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers promote positive relationships within class activities so that pupils get on well with others. These good relationships encourage pupils to contribute enthusiastically to most lesson activities. One parent reflected the views of others by saying, 'The teachers are both approachable and helpful.' Basic skills are generally taught well, particularly their reading and mathematical skills. Teachers use interactive audio visual whiteboards confidently to present information to good effect and this helps to enliven activities. Pupils' ICT skills are now good and used well within other subjects such as literacy. In some lessons where teaching is not quite as strong, pupils sit passively for too long. This causes some pupils to become fidgety and lose concentration. Teachers' marking gives clear day-to-day guidance and teachers are beginning to guide pupils to assess their own work. This is not yet consistent across the school and there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn from their fellow pupils. In some classes, teachers help pupils to improve their writing more quickly by giving them good examples of how to edit their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good base for developing pupils' basic skills and pupils enjoy a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities. Some pupils, however, commented that they would like to see extra-curricular opportunities offered to pupils in Years 1 and 2. There is a good programme of personal and social education, including a residential visit for Year 6 pupils, and these are successful in developing pupils' self-confidence and sense of responsibility. Relatively recent changes in planning have strengthened cross-curricular links between subjects and have made pupils' learning more relevant, purposeful and enjoyable. The curriculum has enabled pupils to develop some understanding of diverse backgrounds, including consideration of world events such as the impact of natural disasters. However, there is not a coherent approach to developing pupils' awareness of those from differing cultures and backgrounds.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Excellent levels of pastoral care are a strength of the school and ensure pupils enjoy attending. Care, guidance and support are good, rather than outstanding as the school judged, because the school's approach to guiding pupils to improve their work is not yet consistent across the school. Good relationships are established with children before they start school. These continue as pupils move up through the school and are supportive in promoting their care and well-being. Parents value the school's efforts and one wrote, 'Our experience of the school is that it fosters a culture of respect and value for each individual child, irrespective of ability or background. . Very good procedures are in place to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils are confident that they can seek help and advice from teachers and other adults when they need it. Close links with parents and with outside agencies also help the school to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. One parent reflected the views of many by saying, 'Our child has additional needs which are managed really well by the staff.' These high levels of support ensure pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities keep pace with others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, supported by experienced senior staff, has successfully created a strong team approach to developing pupils' all-round development. This has resulted in the good levels of their personal development and care. Senior leaders set a clear focus on identifying weaker areas to remedy and have had some partial success such as in improving writing. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and takes the views of parents and pupils very seriously. An example of this is the adoption of changes suggested by parents to allow pupils to wear trainers during playtimes. The school recognises, however, that other ways of gathering or using information could sometimes be more rigorous to help it gauge how different aspects of the school are working. The governors give good support. They provide a good sounding board for the senior leaders and areas such as finance are well supported. They visit regularly to gain insights into the day-to-day running of the school, but these visits do not always have a clear focus and hinders their support. However, based on the school's track record of success, the school has good capacity to improve still further.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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.

Annex A

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 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

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Horton Kirby C of E Primary School, Dartford, DA4 9BN

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and hearing about all that goes on at your school. Yours is a good school that is trying to get even better.

- Most of you make good progress in your work but we would like to see you do even better in your writing. We would like teachers to continue to help you so that your spelling and handwriting get even better.
- You told us that you enjoy school and we agree that you are happy because of the good relationships you have with your friends and your teachers.
- We think the teaching is helping you to make good progress in your work. This is improving as your teachers plan more exciting things for you to do.
- You know about different parts of the world but we have asked that you are given more opportunities to learn about people from different backgrounds, both in this country and in others.
- We think you are cared for well. You have probably noticed that your teachers have started to give you guidance about how to improve your work and some of you knew your targets. We have asked that this get even better so that you all understand what you need to do next to improve.
- You know how to keep safe. We could see that you behaved extremely well in lessons, in the playground and around school.

Finally, I wish you the very best for the future. You can make your school one of the best by suggesting things to help it to improve and by working hard on all that you are asked to do.

Yours sincerely

Julie Sackett Lead Inspector.