

High Hurstwood CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114507
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326023
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Radford
Headteacher	Jane Cook
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
School address	Chillies Lane High Hurstwood Uckfield
Telephone number	01825 733231
Fax number	01825 732864
Email address	office@highhurstwood.e-sussex.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out at no notice by one additional inspector. The inspector visited eight lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and the school council. The inspector observed the school's work, talked to pupils in lessons and looked at examples of the school's recent self-evaluation, the data the school has collected about pupils' progress, samples of pupils' work and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. Thirty parental questionnaires were returned and scrutinised.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following:

- The effectiveness of the school's strategies for improving standards in writing, especially for the more able
- The quality of learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- The use of assessment information and challenging targets to ensure all pupils make consistently good progress
- The effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors in driving improvement.

Information about the school

Most of the pupils in this small village school are of White British heritage. Around 20% live in the village, while the rest travel from the surrounding villages and towns. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to the national average overall but above average in some year groups. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is higher than in most schools. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught in three classes, each of which caters for two year groups. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a separate class. At the time of this inspection, the school was undergoing major building works. The hall and computer suite were unusable and there were severe limitations for staff and children in accessing different parts of the school. This redevelopment programme is due for completion in October 2009 and has been designed to provide the school with significantly improved resources. The school has been awarded Activemark for three consecutive years and has recently received the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors' high aspirations for the pupils are firmly grounded in a shared vision of achieving excellence in all aspects of the school's work. They have already accomplished this in two key areas. The levels of care and support for all pupils are second to none. Procedures for keeping pupils safe are outstanding, particularly at a time when the school is experiencing disruption because of extensive building work. Excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities leads to outstanding progress for these pupils. In addition, all pupils derive huge benefit from the exceptionally good programme of 'learning journeys' that form the core of the first-rate curriculum. This is further enhanced by outstanding partnerships with other schools and external agencies which provide valuable opportunities for all pupils, but particularly the most able. As a result of these outstanding features, pupils feel very safe and develop into exceptionally well-rounded young people, well-prepared for their future lives.

Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation by staff and governors places them in a strong position to maintain the momentum of improvement. They are well aware that some pupils could make even better progress and know that the key to this is refining the recently implemented systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in order to ensure that pupils' individual targets are suitably challenging in relation to their widely varying starting points. The school's data show clearly each pupil's progress from term to term but the long term picture is less clear. There are some exemplary procedures for marking and assessing pupils' progress in writing. Procedures in other subjects are less consistent and do not always give pupils clear advice on how to improve their work.

Pupils enjoy school and achieve well because teachers ensure lessons are lively, interesting and well planned to promote good learning. Higher ability pupils tackle challenging work that demands a good degree of independent thought. The school is at the cutting edge of new technology and pupils thoroughly enjoy using a range of equipment. The governors' excellent financial management has not only contributed greatly to the extensive improvements to the buildings and grounds but also ensures that the school is very well resourced, both with staff and equipment.

There has been a marked improvement in the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage over the past three years, despite continuing staffing difficulties which have now been resolved. Rigorous recruitment procedures and very

good training for all staff have ensured that children now get off to a good start in the reception class. They settle quickly, become independent and make good progress in acquiring basic reading, writing and number skills.

Pupils speak with enthusiasm about all aspects of school life and most parents who responded to the questionnaire have similarly positive views. One parent referred to the school's 'calm and happy environment' and its 'strong community spirit'. The pupils themselves contribute exceptionally well to these qualities and are very proud of their school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that every pupil makes the best possible progress by:
 - refining the procedures for tracking pupils' progress from when they start school to when they leave
 - use this information rigorously to ensure that year-on-year targets are always suitably ambitious given pupils' starting points
 - use and adapt the exemplary practice in marking and assessing progress in writing to sharpen the procedures in other subjects

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In all of the lessons observed pupils made good progress. They knew exactly what they were expected to learn because the teachers explained this clearly and often reminded them along the way to keep them focused on the task. Pupils work hard, sometimes independently, sometimes with a partner or in a small group. Behaviour is generally good but occasionally a few pupils become distracted and lose concentration when they have to sit and listen to the teacher for too long. Teachers are skilful in managing the few pupils who have behavioural difficulties so that they rarely disrupt learning for others. Pupils learn a great deal from the many opportunities to discuss ethical, social and environmental issues and to broaden their experience of the cultural and religious diversity of their own society and the wider world. Preparing to apply for Healthy Schools status is giving pupils an increased awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles. The many opportunities to participate in physical activities, both in lessons and before and after school, help pupils to maintain good fitness levels.

Historically, standards in writing have lagged behind those in other subjects which are generally above average but variable due to the small number of pupils in each year group. The school is successfully closing the gap and standards in writing are rising, particularly for the more able pupils. The introduction of a new programme for teaching letters and sounds to the youngest pupils is having a beneficial knock-on effect throughout the school. By extending opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills through a range of subjects, the school has made writing more relevant, interesting and purposeful for both girls and boys. As a result, pupils' writing shows increasingly good expression, style and grammatical complexity as they move through the school. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were engrossed in writing about

nocturnal creatures. They used text boxes to introduce them to the idea of writing in paragraphs. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 watched video clips and identified the features of good newspaper reports before starting to write their own account of a riot in a Victorian school classroom. Effective teaching of scientific enquiry enables pupils to achieve consistently high standards in the subject while good opportunities to use information technology as a tool for learning develop their skills well.

Teachers' in-depth knowledge of individual pupils' needs and excellent links with a wide range of external agencies ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive first-rate care and support. They make excellent progress and most reach national expectations by the end of Year 6.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are enjoyable because teachers present ideas in ways that captivate pupils and capitalise on their interests. Teachers successfully engage pupils in learning through very effective use of a wide range of resources, including interactive whiteboards and personal hand-held devices. Role play, discussions with partners and opportunities for individual research bring a variety to learning that stimulates pupils' interest. Activities are carefully planned to meet the needs of a wide range of abilities in each class. Within the classes, pupils in each year group have specific targets in reading, writing and mathematics that are closely matched to their needs. Pupils enjoy talking about their targets and explaining how well they are doing. They know what they have to do to reach the next stage in their learning and teachers review their progress regularly. Pupils are also becoming increasingly skilful at assessing their own and each other's progress towards the objectives that are set in a lesson. Teachers provide them with clear guidelines to assist this process, as when pupils in Years 5 and 6 assessed each other's writing against a list of criteria.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Teachers and skilled assistants work closely in partnership to plan for and support pupils who have specific needs, whether learning or behavioural difficulties.

The highly successful 'learning journeys' combine several subjects within an overarching theme in a way that motivates pupils and makes learning relevant and meaningful. This has had a particularly beneficial effect on the quality of learning for the more able pupils because many of the tasks are open-ended, investigative and challenge them to think for themselves. Excellent links with other schools provide additional challenge for the most able pupils, for example in mathematics, art and music. Learning is further enriched by special themed weeks, visits and visitors and a wide variety of extra-curricular activities.

The school's very caring family atmosphere is greatly appreciated by pupils and parents. Older pupils take very seriously their responsibilities as 'buddies' for the youngest children, often coming back to visit them when they have moved on to secondary school. The 'Early Bird Club', introduced in response to parents' requests, gives pupils additional opportunities for physical exercise, alongside extra-curricular activities provided by school staff. Recently introduced 'nurture groups', led by specialists, focus on developing pupils' speech, language and social skills. Regular risk assessments ensure that pupils are kept safe at all times.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A measure of the success of the headteacher, governors and senior staff in pursuing their ambitious vision for the school is the way they have sustained the momentum of improvement in very challenging circumstances. They have made it a high priority to ensure that pupils remain safe and continue to make good progress despite working in a site that is undergoing extensive building and redevelopment work. Very thorough safeguarding procedures cover all aspects of health, safety and child protection. Through careful recruitment of temporary staff and the provision of good training opportunities, the leadership and management have improved the quality of learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, even though permanent staffing arrangements have only recently been finalised. School leaders are aiming for excellence in all areas and know exactly where improvements are needed to achieve their goals. The introduction of new assessment and tracking procedures is an important first step, but leaders are aware that these require further refinement if they are to enable all pupils to make optimum progress.

The inclusion of all pupils, whatever their background or needs, is at the heart of the school's vision which promotes 'respect for all, irrespective of differences'. Pupils' conduct shows that they understand and adopt this philosophy in their daily lives.

There are rigorous procedures for tackling the very rare incidences of racism or discrimination.

The school has carried out a thorough audit of how well it promotes community cohesion and has a clear plan of action, much of which is already in process. Opportunities for older pupils to attend a multi-faith day and to visit a Buddhist retreat centre enabled pupils to find out the beliefs and faiths of a wide range of people. The school's sponsorship of and communication with a child in India gives pupils valuable insights into a culture very different from their own. The school has set up initial links with schools in contrasting localities in the United Kingdom but these are at an early stage of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the reception class has improved and now provides good opportunities for learning. Very good care for the children's safety and welfare and effective arrangements for introducing children to the school help them to settle quickly, to feel secure and happy and to enjoy learning. School leaders and governors have taken decisive steps to maintain good quality teaching in the absence of a permanent member of staff and within the limitations of the outdoor accommodation. The curriculum is imaginatively planned around 'learning journey' themes and provides children with an exciting range of activities that encompass all areas of learning. In the winter, for example, children investigated ice and played in the 'igloo' and 'snow palace' as well as pretending to be penguins and polar bears. Teachers make the most of the excellent grounds and the local area by taking children on seasonal 'Wellie Walks' where they look at trees, search for patterns, take photographs and listen to bird song. Children move freely between the classroom and the outdoor area, selecting activities that interest them. The outdoor area is rather small and has limitations but is well used to provide children with a good range of activities that incorporate all areas of learning. The new reception class, currently under construction, has been designed to provide a much larger and better equipped outdoor space. Good teaching of early reading, writing and

numeracy skills is helping children to make good progress in these and other areas of learning. Occasionally, the teacher's input takes too long and children begin to fidget and lose concentration. The school is aware of the challenge in sharing assessment information between job-share teachers. Both teachers understand the importance of ensuring that there is continuity and progression in learning and make every effort to keep each other informed about children's progress and their individual needs.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are very appreciative of all that the school does for their children. They feel that it provides a warm and welcoming atmosphere and that staff are approachable and take account of their concerns. A small minority of parents queried the school's use of external specialists to provide additional sports activities, before and after school. Evidence shows that the school provides a good range of clubs, some of which are led by staff, others by specialist providers. These activities are appreciated by most parents and pupils.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at High Hurstwood CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspector received 30 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 67 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	7	1	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils



Inspection of High Hurstwood CE Primary School, Uckfield, TN22 4AD

Thank you for your very warm welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you in lessons and meeting with the school council. I was particularly impressed by the way you make an excellent contribution to the school and local community. You also have an exceptionally good understanding of how to keep safe, especially at a time when so much building work is going on around you. Everyone at the school takes very good care of you and helps you to grow into mature and sensible young people.

High Hurstwood is a good school which helps you to make good progress and achieve above average standards. I was pleased to see how hard you are all working to improve your writing. The teachers have introduced some good ideas to help you get even better. You all have very good relationships with your teachers and most of you behave really well all the time. There are just a few who forget the rules you have all discussed and agreed in each class. I was very interested to hear about your links with a girl in India and the older children's visits to places where they learned about different faiths. These help to give you a greater understanding of different cultures, both in your own country and around the world. I could see that you all enjoy learning. This is mainly because the teachers make lessons interesting and use lots of good resources. I was very impressed by the excellent 'learning journeys' and some of you told me how good they were at helping you to learn.

The headteacher, governors and other staff have great plans to make your school an outstanding place to learn. They have already achieved a lot and know exactly what needs to be done to make the school even better. They have recently introduced some new systems for assessing your work and tracking your progress. I have asked them to develop these procedures even more so that everyone can see whether you are making enough progress from when you start school to when you leave. This will make sure that your targets are sufficiently challenging for you. The teachers have some very good systems for assessing your writing and showing you what you need to do to improve. I have asked the school to use these ideas and adapt them to improve the way they mark your work in other subjects.

You can help by always behaving well and trying your hardest to reach your targets.

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner
Lead Inspector

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