

Horsted Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118442
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	326828
Inspection date	12 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	178
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	Gary Lambkin
Headteacher	Lesley Wainwright
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Barberry Avenue Chatham ME5 9TF
Telephone number	01634 863395
Fax number	01634 863395

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school with a particular focus on whether there was any significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment, pupils' progress in mathematics compared to reading and writing, and the effectiveness of assessment systems in tracking pupils' progress and in follow-up action.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, the chair of governors, various staff and pupils. Parents' questionnaires were analysed and visits made to lessons. Work samples and a range of documents were examined. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments given in its self-evaluation were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Children join the Reception class in the September after their fourth birthday. Most have been to one of a wide range of pre-school settings before entry. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are White British with a small number from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have difficulties in learning basic skills or with emotional difficulties is slightly higher than the national average. When pupils first enter school, their attainment is around the expectations for their age.

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. It has excellent links with parents. They are overwhelmingly supportive and praise the strong leadership, the approachability of a friendly staff and the swift resolution of any issues. They rightly state that their children learn in a 'happy, safe and fun environment' and make good progress. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. There is no continuous trend of one gender outperforming the other.

Good teaching in a neat and very well ordered learning environment has led to results being consistently above national averages for several years in key areas of learning. Reading is a particular strength. This is because pupils have good selections of books and parents are supportive at home. Effective teaching of letter sounds, carefully targeted to pupils' abilities, supports pupils' reading and writing skills very well. Teachers plan work effectively for different ability groups in English lessons. While mathematics results have also been strong, average results are not as high as in reading and writing. This is because staff do not match mathematics activities as precisely to pupils' abilities as in English, with the exception of those who find mathematics difficult.

Pupils who experience difficulty learning basic skills make excellent progress. Staff's early identification of those who find learning difficult, combined with good oversight of the provision for these pupils, small group work and the very good links with specialist external agencies, are key factors in making this happen. The very good parental liaison also enables parents to assist and encourage their children at home. The current group of Year 2 pupils has an unusually high proportion of pupils who find it difficult to learn basic skills. It also contains a high percentage of summer term-born children. Although they are achieving well, at this stage, it looks as though Year 2 results may not be as high as in some previous years, while still above average.

Care arrangements are most thorough and secure pupils' well-being. Staff and governors take health and safety and child protection procedures very seriously. There are very good arrangements for first aid with a large number of trained personnel to draw on. Some of the teaching assistants have gained particular skills in areas such as occupational or speech therapy, ensuring that pupils who need this support receive regular help.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settle quickly. All respond very well to the staff's warm and very caring relationships and the secure learning atmosphere. Pupils are confident to ask questions and to express any concerns that they may have. They have a very good attitude towards work and demonstrate excellent behaviour. There have been no exclusions for many years. Pupils show very good levels of courtesy and consideration for others. They have an excellent understanding of healthy living, eating fruit and vegetables regularly at school. They keenly take part in physical education award schemes and join the sports club. The receipt of the Healthy Schools award, among several other awards that the school has received, is testimony to the emphasis that the school places on this aspect. Pupils also know a great deal about safe living. In a Year 1 English lesson, which focused on the story of Goldilocks, the teacher held a serious discussion with the pupils about Goldilocks' wisdom in entering an unknown house on her own. The pupils unanimously felt that Goldilocks had been very unwise.

Staff make good use of modern technology to present their lessons visually and this assists pupils' concentration. They question pupils frequently but sometimes only ask those with their

hands up and so it is possible for others to sit back, even though they are still learning well. A good feature of the school's organisation is the way that staff rotate class responsibilities from time to time and so they retain a freshness and gain a good perspective of how children learn and develop in different parts of the school.

Pupils contribute ideas and feel that their views are welcomed. The school council suggested a 'friendship bench' in the playground. As a result, pupils quickly invite lonely pupils to join in their activities. They contribute to shoebox appeals to support pupils in Eastern Europe. They also donate to several charities, such as local centres for the homeless, and so become aware of the needs of others locally and globally. While pupils study different faiths and beliefs, they are not yet as familiar as they might be with different cultural traditions.

The school offers a good, broad curriculum with a satisfactory number of extra activities, which it is keen to expand. It has made some organisational curriculum changes over time. However, it does not link subjects together as widely and creatively as it might to reinforce pupils' learning. The school recognises this and a review is imminent. Visits to local places of interest, like the park, and visitors such as 'Samuel Pepys', together with specific projects like mathematics and enterprise week to develop pupils' economic awareness, add a stimulating variety. Music, taught by a specialist, is a particularly strong aspect. As a result, pupils develop good musical skills. They use percussion instruments effectively, for example to learn about pulse in music. Additionally, they are very enthusiastic to take part in the choir, which occasionally visits local elderly residents.

The school has very accurately evaluated itself and has an excellent perception of its strengths and areas for development. It has made good improvements to its monitoring arrangements since the last inspection, particularly in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Marking of work is up to date and common approaches ensure that pupils are aware of aspects of their work that are pleasing and those that require attention. Discussion with pupils, however, indicates that few have a clear understanding of what they need to focus on particularly to secure improvement. Tracking systems are clearly in place to record pupils' progress. Nevertheless, the school recognises that staff need to take greater ownership of the analyses made of individual pupils to secure improvements for those who are not making enough progress and to challenge more those who are doing exceptionally well.

The school is addressing community cohesion matters well. Pupils and parents are involved in school matters and there are good links with the local community. The school reaches out to the wider world and wishes to further this and to help pupils understand more that they live in a multicultural society.

The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities effectively and has recently reorganised itself. It challenges, questions and is keen to develop even further. The school has shown a marked consistency in performance over time with a dedicated and stable staff, all of whom are highly committed to the pupils they serve. The school shows a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good teaching and an effective induction programme, which includes parents' assessments of their children's capabilities for staff to build on, enable the children to achieve well in the EYFS. Higher percentages than nationally reach the expectations for the end of the Reception year and several children exceed them. Children enjoy their learning and have warm and comfortable

relationships with adults. Their behaviour is very good. Children participate very well in their tasks and choose their self-initiated learning most sensibly. They develop very responsible attitudes to work.

The staff take excellent care of the children. Regular and comprehensive assessments are made of children's achievements and are used well to plan the next stages of learning. A good curriculum is provided that meets requirements. The quality of the outside activities and resources does not yet match the very good quality of those inside. There is scope to make the outdoor provision a more effective extension to the classroom.

Staff celebrate children's achievements in a well organised learning environment. Children were able to discuss pattern in mathematics and keep together when accompanying a tune with percussion instruments, showing a good sense of timing.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Use the information from tracking pupils' progress more analytically to plan learning strategies for individual pupils' future needs, particularly, but not only, in mathematics.
- Develop the curriculum by improving links between subjects even further in order to deepen pupils' understanding.

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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?	1
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	2
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	1

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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 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

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	1
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**

13 January 2009

Dear Pupils Inspection of Horsted Infant School, Gillingham, ME5 9TF

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. We spent a very pleasant day talking to you about your work and meeting your teachers. The staff take very good care of you and your parents are very pleased that you attend Horsted Infant School.

You attend a good school where you make good progress and have for several years reached standards above those that we often see. Your behaviour is excellent and you thoroughly enjoy your lessons. We were interested to learn about the ideas that you suggest for your school. Your understanding of healthy and safe living is excellent and we noted the enthusiasm you have for sporting activities, which help to keep your bodies fit. We were pleased with the way that you look after one another so that no one feels left out.

There are two main things that the staff can do to improve your school. The teachers know about these matters and intend to do something about them soon. First of all, they know that they need to use records of your progress better to plan out your future learning, especially for those who have not made as much progress as they could, particularly in mathematics. The second matter is to make stronger connections between your different subjects to support your understanding even more and make your learning even more interesting.

Thank you once again for your help when we visited. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector