

Hoath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118361
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339205
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Muggleton
Headteacher	Andrea Noake
Date of previous school inspection	0 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited four lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at teachers' planning, the school's assessment information and safeguarding policies, and samples of pupils' work. They analysed questionnaires from staff and pupils, as well as 19 from parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How well teaching in Years 3 to 6 provides the right level of challenge for all pupils, especially the most able in science.
- How effectively leaders are identifying and responding to the right priorities for development.
- How well the school contributes to community cohesion and helps pupils to take responsibility and to learn about taking care of the environment.
- How successfully the school meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

Most pupils come to this small rural primary school from the village of Hoath, although some travel from further afield through parental choice. The proportion identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Pupil mobility in Years 3 to 6 is relatively high owing to families moving in and out of the village. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a mixed-age class alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2.

The school was federated with another local school in 2007, shortly after its last inspection. It has an Activemark for its work in physical education, received an Eco-Schools award in 2008 and recently gained Healthy School accreditation.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has significant strengths in the way that it supports pupils' personal development. They learn good values and develop very positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils behave exceptionally well and support each other very sensitively in and out of lessons.

The attainment of pupils varies across the school, but is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where there is a rich and exciting curriculum that successfully links areas of learning together. In the rest of the school, progress is less even, being good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Throughout the school, pupils make the best progress in English, especially in reading, where they benefit from frequent opportunities to read at home and at school. In mathematics and science, progress is not always fast enough in Years 3 to 6. This is because teachers do not consistently use assessment information to pitch work at the right level for pupils, including the most able in science.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because they are supported well by skilled teaching assistants and the school goes the extra mile in ensuring that these pupils are able to participate fully in all activities. For example, staff and pupils have learnt sign language so that they can support a pupil with hearing impairment.

Good relationships between teachers and children mean that pupils are very happy at school. They especially like the exciting range of clubs and themed weeks that teachers use to bring subjects alive. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 produced, during a themed week, some high quality science work when learning about the environment. During this, there were many opportunities to apply scientific knowledge to practical applications such as investigations or problem solving. This happens less often in day-to-day lessons in mathematics and science and this is a factor in the slower progress made in these subjects. The school has rightly identified that the good practice in Years 1 and 2 where subjects are closely linked is not carried through to Years 3 to 6, and this limits opportunities for pupils to use their skills across the curriculum.

Pupils are great ambassadors for the school. They make a good contribution to the community by taking part in local events and they work very closely with other schools and groups. Pupils' awareness of the importance of looking after the environment for future generations is excellent. They talk very confidently about how to stop climate change and this reflects the successful work of the school in gaining its Eco-School status. Pupils make a good contribution to school life. They are keen to take responsibility and carry out roles such as being school councillors very conscientiously.

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Over the last two years, the move to federated status with a neighbouring school has been managed well. It has proved beneficial in many ways, especially in improving the range of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, leadership time is now divided time between the two schools and, although leaders are passionate about improving provision, this has slowed the pace of change in Hoath. There is a lack of rigour to self-evaluation. Some of it is out of date because the headteacher is trying to take on too much. Other leaders, at all levels, do not take an active enough part in self-evaluation. Consequently, the right priorities are not always identified quickly enough. Also, insufficient monitoring takes place to ensure that any actions taken are having a sustained impact, particularly with regard to improving attainment and the quality of teaching.

Despite this, the school has demonstrated in the way that it successfully tackled a dip in standards in writing at the end of Year 6 in 2008 that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Decisive steps were taken by the headteacher and subject leader, and significant improvement is suggested by the most recent test results.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move teaching in Years 3 to 6 from satisfactory to good by ensuring that teachers make better use of information about how well pupils are doing to ensure that work is consistently pitched at the right level for all, especially in mathematics and science. (By July 2010)
- Improve the curriculum in Years 3 to 6 so that it builds on good practice in Years 1 and 2 by strengthening links between different subjects to give pupils more opportunities to apply their knowledge to practical activities. (By December 2010)
- Improve the rigour of self-evaluation by strengthening the involvement of leaders at all levels in checking how well the school is doing and monitoring actions to check that they are having a sustained impact on attainment. (by July 2010)
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and achievement is satisfactory. In lessons observed the pupils showed themselves to be working hard, keen and enthusiastic. They make the best progress in Years 1 and 2; for example, in a literacy lesson, pupils worked extremely conscientiously on a task where they identified words to match a targeted phoneme in a text. They made good progress and learnt well because the task was closely matched to their differing needs. Boys and girls were equally well motivated and all made good progress in acquiring skills. In lessons in Years 3 to 6, where progress is satisfactory overall, interesting activities in English promote good learning. In one lesson, speaking skills improved quickly through an engaging role-play activity. However, expectations for pupils of differing ability were not made clear, slowing the

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pace of learning for some. In mathematics lessons, pupils are keen and support each other well, but work is sometimes too hard or too easy and this limits progress.

Attainment varies from year to year because of the small size of cohorts. Pupil mobility also has an impact in Years 3 to 6, and test results at the end of Year 6 are often affected adversely by the late arrival or loss of pupils. The broadly average attainment seen in national tests at the end of Year 6 reflects satisfactory progress for pupils from their different starting points at the end of Year 2. Throughout the school, girls and boys do equally well, making the best progress in English, where attainment has improved to above-average levels in the most recent national tests at the end of Year 6.

The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils learn through activities in PSHE lessons and assemblies to take good care of each other and they behave very sensibly. The positive impact of the work completed in gaining the national Healthy School award is reflected in the pupils' clear understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They grow their own food and mostly, but not always, make sensible choices about what they are going to eat. Sports clubs are greatly appreciated by pupils and successfully encourage good involvement in physical activity. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for later life. They are sociable and articulate and develop good levels of self-esteem and confidence as they get older. Older pupils confidently use modern technology to support their learning. For example they prepare multi-media presentations to present their work to others.

Pupils are keen to come to school, although rates of attendance are no more than average. The school has monitored the situation and identified that this is because a relatively high number of parents take their children on holidays during term time.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There are good features to teaching across the school and this has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teachers are hard working and get on well with the pupils. They make good use of resources such as the interactive whiteboards to make learning interesting. Fun activities such as a well-thought-out role play on the life of an evacuee in a lesson in Years 5 and 6 motivate and engage pupils well. Skilled teaching assistants are effectively deployed to work with groups of pupils. In Years 1 and 2, where teaching is good, work is generally pitched at the right level for all pupils and consequently they quickly acquire new skills. However, in Years 3 to 6, where teaching is satisfactory, there are occasions when work is too hard or too easy for some pupils and this slows learning. The use of marking and targets to help pupils understand how to improve their work varies from subject to subject. Where practice is best, for example in English, pupils are able to talk confidently about the next stage in their learning.

Pupils enjoy school and are well cared for and supported. Pupils feel safe and secure and they know what to do if they have a worry. The school works well with outside agencies to find additional help when it is needed. Good partnerships with other schools have a good effect on learning. For example, gifted and talented pupils work alongside others from different schools in special projects such as a poetry workshop for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Not all pupils benefit in all subjects from appropriate support and guidance; for example, academic guidance is better in English and mathematics than in science.

The school recognises that the curriculum is less effective for pupils in Years 3 to 6 than in the rest of the school. This is the result of subjects being closely linked in Years 1 and 2, and here, pupils' learning is made more purposeful. There is less of this good practice in Years 3 to 6. In particular, progress in mathematics and science is affected by the limited opportunities given to pupils to practise and apply their knowledge to practical applications in different subjects.

Enrichment of the curriculum is good. An exciting range of clubs in areas such as archery, computing and gardening are greatly enjoyed by pupils and promote personal development well. As one pupil said, 'Even though the school is small we do lots of fun things!'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clear vision for improvement can be seen in the range of helpful recent initiatives pursued by the school. These are beginning to have a positive effect and demonstrate the school's sound capacity to improve. For example, new approaches to teaching writing have helped to improve progress in the last academic year. The school has already begun to tackle weaknesses in science by reviewing the curriculum and seeking external support. The school engages well with parents and actively seeks and responds to their views, for example by holding curriculum evenings on new projects. Parents are also invited to come and join in practical activities with their children in class for 'Lively Literacy' or 'Noisy Numeracy' lessons. Activities such as these actively encourage parental involvement in their children's education and contribute successfully to the way that the school works with parents.

The leadership of the headteacher continues to move the school forward since the last inspection, although the pace of change has been slowed by the demands of overseeing the federation of two schools. Senior leaders, middle managers and governors have a clear vision for school development. They are rightly working to strengthen the already satisfactory systems for reviewing the work of the school. In particular, there is currently insufficient involvement of leaders at all levels in identifying what is going well and what needs to be improved, and then taking the appropriate action. At the moment, too much responsibility for this falls on the shoulders of the headteacher and this is slowing the drive for improvement by governors and other staff.

There are sound safeguarding procedures. At the time of the inspection, national guidelines in this area were fully met, although the school does not always follow best practice in the maintenance of records such as behaviour logs or risk assessments.

The school promotes equality successfully by monitoring pupils' progress carefully and supporting those who are in danger of falling significantly behind. Leaders ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in school events and they help pupils to learn to respect the beliefs of others. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. There are close links with schools in the United Kingdom and pupils get good opportunities to meet with children from different backgrounds. Consequently, pupils' understanding of life beyond Hoath is good. The school is rightly strengthening this knowledge further by establishing links with schools in Finland and Nigeria to develop cultural awareness even more.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

'Although my child has only been in school a few days, she is already very happy and settled.' This comment from a parent is typical of the positive view that parents have of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Usually, most children start school working at the expected levels for their age. Good teaching helps ensure that the children make good progress and learn well, so that attainment is above average, and sometimes higher, by the end of Reception. A skilled teaching assistant supports the class teacher very ably and ensures that differing needs are met effectively in the mixed- age class. High-attaining children benefit from working alongside older pupils and this helps them to make rapid progress in developing new skills, especially in language and number. Adults have high expectations of all children and give them calm and sensitive support when it is needed. All children benefit enormously from exciting activities and an interesting curriculum that promote independence, confidence and enjoyment and provide good challenge. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a good understanding of what still needs to be improved. For example, the school is rightly working on the further improvement of the relatively new outdoor area so that it can be used more fully in the different areas of learning.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents indicated that they are very pleased with nearly all aspects of the school. All feel that their children are well looked after, are happy and enjoy their learning. A small number of parents raised concerns about communication. Systems for communicating with parents are the same as those typically found in most schools, although leaders have not recently published a school profile as required by regulations.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hoath Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 58 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	68	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	47	7	37	1	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	68	4	21	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	68	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	53	6	32	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	63	6	32	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	47	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	63	5	26	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	37	9	47	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	58	5	26	0	0	1	5
The school is led and managed effectively	12	63	3	16	2	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	68	5	26	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 September 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hoath Primary School, Hoath CT3 4LA

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for showing us your work and completing the questionnaire. You were very polite and friendly. At the moment, your school is providing a satisfactory education. This means that we found some good things in the school but also some things that need to be improved.

Some of the things we found out about your school:

- Your behaviour is superb. We are very pleased that you told us in the questionnaires that you enjoy school so much.
- You get a good start in Reception and continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. You make good progress in English across the school. Progress in mathematics and science is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6.
- You told us that the grown-ups in school look after you well and are kind and caring. We could see that they give you suitable help when you find work difficult.
- You have a well organised school council and this helps you to take responsibility for many things. It is great that you are doing so much to look after the planet.
- You told us that there are many interesting things to do outside lessons. These also help you develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.
- Your parents and carers are pleased that you come to this school.
- The headteacher knows clearly what needs to be improved.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Help you to make better progress in mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6 by making sure that your work is not too hard or too easy for you.
- Give pupils in Years 3 to 6 more opportunities to link together their learning in different subjects.
- Make sure that all leaders, including governors, do more to check that you are all doing well enough and then take action to improve things where needed.

We wish you all well for the future. We hope you continue to help your teachers by continuing to work hard and being so bubbly and positive and by trying not to miss school without good reason.

Yours faithfully

Mike Capper

Additional Inspector

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