

# Harcourt Primary

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118871
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	339314
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	117
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kevin Golding
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Dakin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Biggins Wood Road Folkstone Kent CT19 4NE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 275294
<b>Fax number</b>	01303 279176
<b>Email address</b>	secretary@harcourt.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with representative governors, staff and pupils and spoke to parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's improvement plans, governors' minutes, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 14 parent, 15 staff and 70 pupil questionnaires were received and analysed.

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

- pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in writing
- how well pupils do in Key Stage 1, in view of apparently low attainment levels
- the effectiveness of leadership and middle management on school improvement.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The majority of pupils are from White British families with a small percentage from minority ethnic groups, mainly Nepalese. Mobility is high because the school serves an area housing a barracks of the armed forces, usually accommodating Gurkha regiments. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language and many join the school speaking little English. Entitlement to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who hold a statement of special educational needs, is high and covers a broad range of needs. Most pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There is a private nursery on site and the school runs breakfast and after-school homework clubs.

The school holds Healthy School, Activemark, Artsmark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Study Support, Modern Foreign Language and Travel Plan awards. Staff are involved in a national programme to improve pupils' attainment and they work with other schools locally in developing the curriculum. There has been a considerable turnover in staffing since the last inspection in 2007, and the majority of teachers are new to the school this year.

**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**

**2**

## Main findings

Harcourt Primary School is a satisfactory school which has made a number of improvements since the last inspection, most significantly in teaching and learning and in the care and support of pupils. It has developed a fine ethos that values hard work, achievement, helpfulness and respect for others, shown in pupils' good behaviour. A parent rightly commented that 'Harcourt is a very friendly, community based school. The children enjoy their learning and all appear to be happy.' Pupils' good understanding of all aspects of healthy living is recognised in the Healthy School, Activemark and Travel Plan awards. Pupils feel safe, knowing that adults take their concerns seriously and give them good levels of support and guidance.

The sound start children get in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps them to develop well socially and begin to gain the early literacy and numeracy skills necessary for more formal learning through the rest of the school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their attainment broadly average. Pupils' reading skills are stronger than their writing skills. Attainment in English lags behind mathematics because pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their writing or to write at sufficient length. For a few pupils, weak handwriting and presentation of their work hamper the fluency of their creative writing. Good teaching through the school results in even progress for all groups of pupils. Teaching assistants guide individuals or small groups, though on occasion they give pupils too much help to complete the task rather than encouraging pupils to learn by thinking things through for themselves. The curriculum gives pupils sound opportunities which satisfactorily prepare them for secondary education, but the focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills has deflected the school from providing sufficient depth in other subjects. This is now being addressed through the school's new topic-based curriculum, but further work is necessary to ensure that pupils have opportunities to apply their basic skills in the real contexts of other subjects. Learning is organised so that it is interesting and enjoyable for pupils, and events such as cultural days and festival celebrations make a strong contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The headteacher's determination to make improvements, particularly in pupils' attainment through higher quality teaching, has secured steady progress through a challenging time of high staff mobility. Effective self-evaluation accurately identifies those areas which need attention to have the greatest impact on improving attainment. Current staff and governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and middle managers, many new to their posts, know exactly what has to be done to enhance outcomes for pupils. The school has the skills and expertise to implement the school's well-focused and detailed improvement plan, giving the school a

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good capacity to accelerate ongoing improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment, particularly in writing by:
  - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length and practise their writing in other subjects
  - making sure that pupils are given opportunities to follow up the advice given to them when their work is marked
  - improving the quality of handwriting and presentation of pupils' work.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure that all subjects are covered in sufficient depth and make effective links between them.
- Ensure that all teaching assistants support pupils' learning throughout the whole lesson, encouraging them to work independently.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils have good attitudes to school, shown in the way they concentrated in the lessons observed. Most pupils indicated in the questionnaires that they learn a lot in lessons. They say that they are expected to work hard and they respond particularly well to practical work and enjoy lessons best when they are actively involved in their learning. Pupils are articulate and enjoy talking about their school and their work. Although most pupils take considerable care with their work, standards of presentation and organisation of work are weaker for others, and this is not always picked up by an adult. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good because adults manage behaviour consistently, and the large majority of pupils say that their classmates behave well. Pupils identified as having behavioural or emotional difficulties are given good support to help them to understand the impact of their actions and to learn strategies to cope, and they do not disrupt the learning of others.

Pupils' achievement in relation to their starting points is satisfactory. After a number of years where attainment was low, levels of attainment rose in 2009 and are now broadly average, including the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels. The disruption caused by frequent staffing changes has slowed pupils' progress so that it has been necessary to boost their achievement in their final years. The school's data show that pupils are now making more even progress and that the below average attainment in Key Stage 1 reflects pupils' low starting points. As pupils gain confidence in their achievements, they develop a momentum in their learning as they move through the school and their progress accelerates. All groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, make satisfactory progress and are on course to meet their targets. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length. Pupils have a good understanding of the quality of their work and enjoy completing their 'learning passports' which help them to understand what they have to learn next.

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Pupils enthusiastically take on a wide range of responsibilities. For example, older pupils mentor younger children and the care with which pupils undertake their roles, such as lunchtime duties and running the fruit club, makes an important contribution to the smooth day-to-day organisation of the school. Pupils value the school council and appreciate the opportunity to influence the management and organisation of the school, for example in helping to plan summer holiday activities run at the school. Pupils have a good understanding of democracy through the formal elections for school councillors, helping to equip them for life beyond school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

The school has worked well with local authority consultants to improve teaching. New staff are aware of the school's high expectations so that there is consistency of practice across the school. Teachers plan successfully for the different ages, abilities and needs in their groups, whether in class lessons or in literacy and numeracy groups. Teachers have a lively and informal approach and effectively engage pupils at key points through the lesson. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning because, as one pupil

<sup>1</sup> 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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commented, teachers take care to 'help everyone and make learning fun with games and role plays'. Marking is thorough and usually identifies how work can be improved, and pupils know what they have to do to raise their levels. However, teachers do not always give pupils timely opportunities to test out whether or not they understand the guidance given by applying it to another task.

While the curriculum meets all requirements, the planning of an integrated curriculum is not developed to provide sufficient depth of study in some subjects such as history and geography to give pupils the skills needed for secondary school. By contrast, links with secondary schools for projects in science and art give pupils good experiences and strengthen their achievements. The curriculum is suitably modified for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A variety of links with other schools provide social opportunities for pupils to mix with a wider range of pupils of their own age while adding interest to their learning. After-school and lunchtime clubs provide a very good range of additional opportunities to take exercise and pursue individual interests, and the large majority of pupils participate in at least one activity.

Ensuring that individuals are valued and supported lies at the heart of the school's work. Projects such as anger management or self-esteem programmes for small groups or individuals are high profile elements of the school's structure to care, guide and nurture pupils. Together with a good programme of personal development, pupils are enabled to consider their feelings and emotions within a very secure environment which helps them to develop their attitudes, behaviour and their own code of values. Transition into the school, whether in the Reception class or when pupils join later, is well established and effective, helping pupils to fit into the school community quickly with minimal disruption to learning. Where a pupil's attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern the school is proactive in investigating the underlying causes and in offering families the support they need to ensure that their child's learning and development is not affected. This has helped to sustain average attendance levels in spite of time taken off for religious festivals and some families having to take holidays during term time because of the nature of parents' work. The school promotes a wide range of multicultural activities, raising pupils' awareness and integrating pupils and their families from different backgrounds firmly into the school community.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

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

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The headteacher and governors are ambitious for the school's future and set appropriately challenging targets to accelerate progress and raise pupils' attainment. Regular monitoring of teaching and a programme of professional development have been used effectively to improve practice and pupils' progress is being successfully boosted in their final years in the school to redress some earlier underachievement. Middle managers form a strong team with newly delegated responsibilities. They give good support for their colleagues, based on an accurate understanding of where improvements can be made and how this can be achieved. Teachers and other staff are positive about their achievements, enthusiastic for the future and for strengthening teamwork across the school. The work with external agencies, including social services and health professionals, is a considerable school strength and is effectively removing the significant barriers a minority of pupils have to their learning and development. Staff work well with colleagues in other local schools to pool resources and provide additional experiences for pupils, all helping to drive up standards. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and particularly recognise the obstacles that the school faces. Individual governors use their expertise and skills to support and challenge the school, though there has been difficulty in recruiting a full complement to the governing body. Careful and shrewd budget management has secured funding to improve facilities now that the school has entered a more stable phase in its development.

The school values diversity and provides an inclusive environment for its pupils. Links with parents and carers are strong and based on a good understanding of local community needs and circumstances. Opportunities such as a father and son outdoor venture activity or a class for parents, particularly those of Nepalese heritage to learn English as a foreign language, make a strong contribution to enabling parents and carers to feel an essential part of the school community and help them to understand how their children learn. Good arrangements to promote community cohesion are reflected in the harmonious school community and wider links, for example through a link with a Nepalese school, and are effectively developing pupils' awareness of life in the wider world. Procedures to monitor achievement and promote equal opportunities are effective, and their impact can be seen in the similar outcomes of different groups of pupils. Safeguarding arrangements are good and meet all current requirements, ensuring that pupils work and play in a secure environment

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Sound provision, including the temporary arrangements for leadership and management, enable children to make a positive start to school. Children are happy to come to school because they are safe and well cared for. They learn to work and play together in a bright and well-organised area suitable for their needs. The outdoor area provides a good facility as an outdoor classroom but is not used as frequently as it could be for the full range of learning. The good links with the nursery in the school and other nurseries help children to settle quickly, made easier by the high levels of adult support because the group is small. Parents and carers are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning and appreciate the record of every child's learning and development compiled through the year. Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are much lower than those normally found, especially in their communication skills and social and emotional development. A few join with limited or no English. Generally pupils engage well in their activities and work and play together effectively although a few still find it difficult to adjust to the school's routines and expectations. Activities are planned across all the required areas for their learning and children make sound progress from their starting points, although their attainment on entry to Year 1 generally remains below the expectations for children's ages. The majority of pupils are making good progress in identifying sounds and beginning to write, seen in an effective session where children identified a range of sounds. A few children need a wider range of activities to develop their early writing skills. Daily observations and assessments are detailed and used well, particularly to identify children who may need specialist support. External agencies are involved where additional expertise is needed, and staff are working closely with an early years adviser to develop practice further.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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## Views of parents and carers

While relatively few parents and carers returned questionnaires, those who did are positive about the school, indicating that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. Almost all believe that the school keeps their children safe and deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Very few parents raised concerns and these related to individual issues. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the school's pastoral care and partnership with parents, illustrated in comments such as, 'Staff are approachable and willing to listen and help. The school encourages parent involvement and has a strong sense of community.' A few parents or carers of children with special educational needs are particularly pleased with the support they are given, as well as their child, and this is shown in the comments: 'the school has always given us a lot of support and guidance'.very caring staff, not always given the praise they deserve' and 'I get a lot of support from all the teachers.'

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harcourt 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 17 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 117 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	88	2	12	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	82	2	12	1	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	15	88	2	12	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	76	2	12	2	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	82	3	18	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)	13	76	4	24	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	76	2	12	2	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	71	4	24	1	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	88	2	12	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	82	3	18	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



26 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Harcourt Primary School, Folkestone, CT19 4NE

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We found the information you gave us when you spoke with us very valuable and we want to let you know what we found out.

We think yours is a satisfactory school which is on course to become even better. You are very welcoming to visitors and new pupils to the school. This makes the school a happy place for you all, particularly to eat and play together at lunchtime. You behave well and this helps everyone to concentrate in lessons. Teachers plan interesting activities for you and you told us how much this helps you enjoy your learning. You appreciate that adults are always on hand to explain things again if you do not understand. Your 'learning passports' are a really good way to help you to know what you have to do to improve your work. Adults take good care of you and make sure that the school is a safe place for you. The staff and governors make sure that your parents or carers know what's going on in school, and arrange some interesting things for you to do together.

The standards you reach are average and we agree with your teachers that the following things will help you to do even better, particularly in writing:

- giving you more opportunities to write more and practise your writing in other subjects
- helping you to improve your handwriting and the presentation of your work
- giving you an activity to do to check that you understand the advice teachers give you when they mark your work
- making more of the work you do in topics.

Your teaching assistants will be taking care to make sure that they help you to learn as well as possible. We know that you will help by continuing to do your best.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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