

High Halstow Primary School

Harrison Drive, High Halstow, Rochester, ME3 8TF

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most pupils make good progress and achieve well in most subjects. Some make exceptional progress from their starting points.
- The school is improving because the headteacher, staff and governors make good use of information on how well pupils make progress to improve teaching and learning.
- Achievement in reading has improved. Most pupils learn to read quickly and reach the expected levels because phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught well. Pupils who fall behind are effectively supported and catch up quickly.
- Teaching and learning are good overall and some teaching is outstanding over time. Most teachers have high expectations of the pupils and teach interesting lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and attendance has improved, so that it is now above the national average. This has helped improve the progress pupils make.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils say they enjoy school and are often excited about their learning. They feel safe in school and have excellent relationships with each other and their teachers.
- Pupils enjoy plentiful opportunities to take part in competitive sport. Many attend an extensive range of after-school clubs.
- The headteacher is well supported by a strong team of leaders and a highly effective governing body. Governors have acted decisively to strengthen teaching by seeking new partnerships as part of their drive to give every pupil the best start in their education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Work set for the more able pupils is not always challenging enough; as a result, not all of these pupils achieve the higher levels.
- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to make sure that all pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Two of the 16 observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed the final rehearsal for the Year 6 drama production.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, representative governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives of the Williamson Trust and with school staff, including senior and subject leaders. Inspectors talked informally to a number of pupils during lessons and break times.
- Pupils' work in books was scrutinised and a representative sample of pupils was heard to read. Information about the performance of pupils, both in the classroom and in national tests, was analysed.
- Forty-three responses to the online survey, Parent View, were considered, together with a small number of letters and emails. Eighteen responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.
- A number of documents were examined, including: the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for development; improvement plans; records of governing body meetings; safeguarding files; records and logs about pupils' behaviour and attendance; data on pupils' progress and information on the monitoring of teachers' performance.

Inspection team

Richard Potts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care, is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- In 2013, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school shares its site with a private nursery, which did not form part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils.
- Raise the achievement of the more able pupils by ensuring that the work set is consistently challenging.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children begin school in Reception with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make good overall progress in their learning, so that by the end of Year 6, attainment is above average, especially in writing.
- A focus on improving speech and language in the Early Years Foundation Stage is helping children make good progress in Reception. This year, the percentage of children who have reached a good level of development is above the 2013 national figure.
- Progress is good in Key Stage 1. Provisional results for 2014 show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above the 2013 national averages. Pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) is good.
- The school's own assessment information, together with evidence taken from discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work, indicates that rates of progress of all groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is not English, in Key Stage 2 are accelerating. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are already achieving standards above those typically expected for their age and the school predicts that performance will maintain an improving trend at Key Stage 2. This is because most teachers are making effective use of information on how well pupils make progress to ensure that work is challenging.
- While a small minority of pupils make exceptional progress, proportionately few of the more able make better than expected progress. This is because not all teachers consistently set tasks that sufficiently extend these pupils' learning.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. They receive good support from intervention programmes that help them to close the gaps in their learning.
- Good use of pupil premium funding to address underperformance has ensured that eligible pupils do at least as well as their classmates. There are no appreciable gaps in their performance because effective teaching ensures that these pupils make good progress in their learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils are highly motivated to learn because teachers plan work that is interesting and provide good opportunities to develop basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good because, over time, it has led to most pupils making good progress. In Key Stage 1 in particular, an increasing proportion of teaching is outstanding and as a result, a small proportion of pupils make exceptional progress.
- Pupils learn well because most teachers keep a careful check on what groups and individuals can do and make sure that their teaching moves understanding forward rapidly.
- Most teachers skilfully question pupils to judge levels of understanding and to encourage deeper thinking. Marking is thorough and teachers' comments usefully set out how pupils can achieve the next steps in their learning. This helps pupils to make better progress in their work.
- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils which lead to work that is challenging. In a few lessons, lower expectations lead to tasks that are not demanding enough. As a result, some learning, particularly for the more able pupils is slowed and lesson time wasted as they sometimes wait for others in the class to catch up with them. Occasionally, they are given extra work when they complete a task, which does little to extend their thinking or strengthen their skills.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and understand how to promote pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. Effective teaching assistants support learning well, so that there are no gaps in performance between the various groups of pupils.
- Relationships throughout the school between adults and pupils are characterised by respect and trust. Pupils respond well to instruction and the school is a positive and nurturing place in which to learn.

- Teachers work well as a team to plan whole-school activities. Work focusing on the cultures, traditions, environments and peoples of countries playing in the World Cup has promoted pupils' understanding of the world, while providing enjoyable activities leading to the school's own football finals.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school has worked closely with parents and carers to improve attendance. As a result, rates of attendance have improved and are now above the national average. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and that the teachers make learning fun. Very few pupils arrive late each day.
- Pupils are proud of their achievements and their school. They are eager to share their work with each other, with their teachers and with visitors. High-quality displays of pupils' work celebrate their progress and emphasise the culture of learning that pervades the school.
- Positive attitudes to learning are a feature of the school. Even on the few occasions when teaching is less than good, most pupils maintain concentration and behave well.
- Well-developed and effective systems of rewards and sanctions encourage good behaviour. Carefully maintained logs indicate that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils are confident that all adults in school will help them, should any friendship issues arise.
- All groups of pupils are helpful, tolerant and thoughtful towards each other. Older pupils demonstrate a genuine concern for the younger ones and take care to look after them. They carry out their responsibilities as play leaders and monitors well, which contributes to the strong sense of community within the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All policies and procedures are kept up to date and pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when out and about or when using technology.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs that affect their behaviour are well supported. Innovative approaches to improving pupils' attitudes to school, such as the deployment of Jock the 'Pets as Therapy' dog and his mentor to support pupils' learning, make a telling contribution to the overall welfare of all pupils.
- A handful of parents and carers expressed concern about bullying on the online questionnaire, Parent View. This was not reflected in the responses to the school's own survey of parental opinion. Pupils were adamant that there was very little bullying and that it was not tolerated by the school. During the inspection, inspectors received no direct complaints or saw any evidence of bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a strong commitment to excellence and has assembled a workforce that shares the vision of creating an outstanding school over time.
- Well supported by capable and effective senior and middle leaders, the headteacher has overseen improvements in pupils' achievement, in the quality of teaching and in rates of attendance since the previous inspection. There remain small variations in the rate at which pupils make progress in all subjects across the school, but plans to increase the school's effectiveness reflect a detailed and accurate evaluation of its performance and provide a solid foundation on which to secure further improvement.
- Leaders responsible for subjects and areas of the school's work, make good use of information on pupils' progress to check any slowing down. Checks are followed up swiftly with well-thought-out support that helps pupils who fall behind to catch up.
- Senior leaders carefully monitor the effectiveness of teachers and other staff and set ambitious targets for the improvement of their work. The management of teachers' performance is effective because it is strongly focused on supporting pupils' progress and meeting their learning needs. There is a close link between teachers' range of duties, their effectiveness and their pay.

- The special educational needs coordinator makes sure that programmes to help pupils catch up are well judged and evaluated. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- The curriculum is a strong feature of the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of educational experiences which promote good learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported. Good use is made of pupil premium funding to enrich the curriculum and provide specialist support.
- The school makes good use of the primary school sports funding. It is used to provide training for teachers so that they can teach higher-quality physical education (PE) and games. In addition, it has enabled the school to commission specialist provision that has improved pupils' access to competitive sporting events. Achievement in PE is good, pupils enjoy sport and a high proportion of pupils attend additional, after-school sports clubs.
- The school has made good use of the partnership opportunities offered by the Williamson Trust. Teachers and governors speak very favourably about how the sharing of expertise across the Trust schools, together with joint training events and the professional challenge of working with like-minded people, has led to better practice and higher expectations.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Improved governance has been a key factor underpinning the school's improvement. Governors, both at local and Trust Board levels, are unified by a vision of excellence and provide strong support for the work of the school. Their energy and insight contribute positively to the strategic drive for improvement. Decisions are made on the basis of a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Their monitoring of work, enhanced by the good quality training they have undertaken, means that governors have a good knowledge of the school's performance compared with other schools. This allows them to hold the school robustly to account for its improvement and to ensure that teachers' performance is closely linked to pay progression. They keep a close eye on how the school deploys its resources. As a result, they make well-informed decisions about the use of additional funds, such as the pupil premium, and recognise that this is helping to eliminate gaps in performance between groups and individual pupils. Governors make sure that statutory requirements are met, particularly those relating to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137990
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	442483

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Cottle
Headteacher	Gemma Stangroom
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 October 2012
Telephone number	01634 251098
Email address	office@hhpschool.co.uk

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