

Hollingbourne Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118292
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312871
Inspection date	13 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Lindsay

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	105
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	Yvonne Evans
Headteacher	Ralph Baldock
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Eyborne Street Hollingbourne Maidstone ME17 1UA
Telephone number	01622 880270
Fax number	01622 880270

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small rural school on the outskirts of Maidstone. There is Early Years Foundation Stage education for children in a Reception class, where children are taught with some Year 1 pupils. The great majority of pupils come from a White British heritage. More pupils than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Each year group is relatively small and so classes are mixed-age. Occasionally, there is a wide gender imbalance. The school has received a number of awards reflecting its commitment to healthy living, and for teaching pupils about wider world issues.

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. Not only do pupils receive a good academic education, and achieve well, but their personal development and well-being are outstanding. As one parent put it, the school 'finds the whole child'. The school works well in partnership with others, especially parents so that they contribute much to their children's learning. They are also generally very supportive of the school by, for example, helping to run various clubs. The great majority of parents say their children enjoy school.

Children enter the Reception class at levels that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. However, there can be quite wide variations in ability in the small numbers who join each year. Progress is not as rapid at this stage as it is thereafter. Children make satisfactory progress overall, but their writing and mathematical skills are not as well developed as their reading and personal, social and emotional development by the time they join Year 1. This is because there has been a sharp focus on promoting children's independence as learners and the school overall has a strong focus on developing reading skills. From Years 1 to 6, pupils achieve well because teaching is good and pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent. As a result, standards are above average. Pupils do particularly well in writing in Years 1 and 2. However, there is some 'tailing-off' of progress in this subject as they move up through Years 3 to 6. Rectifying this shortcoming is a high priority for the school and the impact is already showing in the improved standards of writing in the current Year 6.

A rich curriculum is much enhanced by the excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils; these add considerably to their love of school. There are now plans to link subjects more effectively in Years 3 to 6 to ensure that opportunities to write in subjects other than English are maximised. Outstanding pastoral care leads pupils to feel very safe and secure in school. Good academic guidance means that most pupils know what to do to improve, but this is not consistent throughout the school. For example, some books are marked with very clear guidance as to how pupils can improve. Others, however, are less clear and targets are not used effectively enough so that all pupils know how to get to the next stage in their learning.

The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school. Among its priorities is ensuring that the school is very much part of the local and global communities. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding and respect for others' needs. There is a strong sense of commitment at all levels in the school to carry on improving and there is no sense of complacency. The school's success so far illustrates its good capacity to improve further. Governors are prepared to question the school and are fully involved in the push for even higher standards.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle well when they start in the Reception class. There is a strong focus on their personal development and their speaking and listening skills and so they soon learn to become independent and show respect for each other. A recent, more structured method of teaching letters and sounds has been effective in helping children to learn to read. However, there has been less emphasis on developing their writing and mathematical skills. The school recognises that children have not made enough progress in the past in these areas and steps have been taken that are already leading to improvements.

Children love choosing from the wide range of purposeful activities, although the activities for developing mathematical skills are less enticing and so not selected as readily. The secure, well-resourced outdoor area encourages them to move freely from indoors to outside. Teaching is satisfactory. Adults work well as a team and use questions effectively to encourage children to think and learn through, for example, exploring their senses. However, staff are not always accurate in their assessment of what children can do, tending to be over cautious. Consequently, the data that is available when children move into Year 1 does not always fully reflect their capabilities. This is already recognised by the school and steps are being taken to assess progress more accurately. Children's welfare is given a high priority. They are very well looked after by knowledgeable, caring adults, and this approach has a big impact on their emotional development and sense of security. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. New initiatives, such as the Learning Journal, are beginning to have an impact on children's progress overall. They encourage parental involvement in their children's learning and also ensure more rigorous evaluation of what children can do.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all children make consistently good progress in writing and mathematical development in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in writing within Years 3 to 6.
- Resolve inconsistencies in the way teachers assess, track and mark pupils' work so all pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall achievement is good, with the strongest progress in Years 1 to 6. By the end of Year 2 standards are consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics, with writing particularly strong. A far higher proportion of pupils reach the higher levels, especially in writing and mathematics, than the national average. Progress is good for all pupils across Year 1 and Year 2, as those who need extra help due to learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and therefore also progress well. By the end of Year 6, standards have been maintained at above national averages in English, mathematics and science. A decline in the most recent national test results for English at Year 6 was the result of relatively weaker writing results. The school has acted promptly to improve writing through focused teaching and changes to the curriculum. These actions are having a positive impact on achievement and standards in the current Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding aspect of the school. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are extremely good, resulting in mature, caring pupils who have a very strong understanding of the needs of others within the school community and further afield. They obviously love coming to school, which is reflected in their good attendance levels. Pupils speak very enthusiastically, not only of enjoyable and 'fun' lessons, but also of the extra opportunities open to them through sport, music, and many visits including residential trips. Events such as camping in the school field are obviously exciting for them and help develop their independence.

Pupils have a very strong understanding of how to lead healthy lives and have an excellent knowledge of the benefits of exercise and healthy eating. Behaviour is outstanding and contributes to pupils feeling very safe and secure in school. Pupils say bullying is a rare

occurrence, but is effectively dealt with when it does happen. Pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities such as peer mediators, play leaders and school council members, and this helps them make an excellent contribution to the school community. They also are fully involved in the local and wider communities and have developed a very strong understanding of the importance of maintaining traditions such as maypole dancing and egg-rolling. Links with schools in very different social and religious contexts mean that pupils also understand that their community is not necessarily typical. Good literacy and numeracy skills, outstanding personal development, and a firm knowledge of what it means to be responsible citizens ensure pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is consistently good teaching in Years 1 to 6. Relationships are very strong and behaviour management is good, so pupils are ready and willing to learn. In the most effective lessons, there is a clear focus on what pupils are learning and suitably challenging activities match the different abilities in the mixed-age classes. Teaching assistants, who are generally highly trained, play an important role in pupils' learning in class and in small group work. Some lessons lack the excitement and pace that would make them outstanding, however, and there is not yet a consistent approach to using what pupils know and can do to help them understand how to improve further. For example, marking is very effective in some classes, but in others does not give enough guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum covers all subjects and pupils also benefit from weekly French lessons and swimming. In Years 1 and 2, subjects are taught through topics, and a clear focus on developing writing skills has had a strong impact on achievement in this area. The curriculum for Years 3 to 6 is still developing this focus, looking at ways to use English more across other subjects. Adaptations to the curriculum are already influencing standards in this subject. Writing workshops on topics such as 'Zany Zoos' are firing pupils' imagination, and focused staff training has also led to writing having more emphasis in other subjects. Pupils benefit greatly from the wealth of extra-curricular activities, described by one parent as 'wonderful and unique opportunities'. The extended lunch break is used to give pupils the opportunity to enjoy sport, music and computers. These activities have a very strong impact on their personal development and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

While academic guidance and support are generally strong, pastoral care is outstanding due to what one parent described as 'the exceptionally caring staff'. The school puts in excellent levels of support using many outside agencies to tailor help to the needs of specific pupils. A staff member with responsibility for family support is also on hand to liaise between home and school. This means that pupils who have particular needs are enabled to learn well and progress as well as their peers. Procedures to safeguard pupils are robust.

Much of the school's information about what pupils know and can do is used well to help them improve, but this is not yet routinely the case. Most pupils know what their targets are, but they are not always given enough guidance in knowing what they need to do to move on to the next level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management are focused on maintaining high standards and achievement throughout the school and on ensuring all pupils are treated equally. Self-evaluation is accurate and areas of development are picked up and acted on quickly. The relative weakness of writing in Years 3 to 6 is a notable example. Governors are active participants in school life, know the school well and hold it to account. Leaders and managers have been less robust in the overall monitoring and evaluation of standards and achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but this is something the school is now addressing.

Community cohesion has been developed well. Although a rural school, it is not insular. It does much to reach out to its wide catchment area, ensuring all parents are involved and that pupils participate fully in village life and traditions. Pupils are given many opportunities to understand what life is like elsewhere, not only in very different types of schools in Britain, but also in countries such as Malawi where close links have been forged. Trips to France also help develop pupils' understanding of other cultures. All of this leads to pupils having an excellent empathy and respect for others.

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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?	2
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	2
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hollingbourne Primary School, Maidstone, ME17 1UA

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and your teachers, taking part in your assembly, watching your lessons and having lunch with you. Your school is a good one and there are some things that are outstanding too.

Here are some of the best things about your school

- You really enjoy school and your behaviour is excellent. You feel very safe because adults look after you so well. You are very knowledgeable about how to stay healthy and you make good use of the excellent opportunities to learn about things outside of lessons.
- Teaching is good and you enjoy your lessons.
- All the people who lead and manage your school do it well.
- Your school is very much a part of the local community and you also know a lot about how others live in different parts of Britain and in other countries of the world. This helps you to have considerable respect for others.

This is what we have asked your school to do next

- Make sure that all the children in the Reception class make good progress in their writing and mathematical understanding, and that pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress in writing.
- Ensure that the comments teachers write in your books and how they use your targets always help you to know how to improve.

You can help your school by continuing to behave excellently and trying to do your best all the time.

Best wishes for your future

Yours faithfully

Joan Lindsay

Lead inspector