

Horsted Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118477
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	326836
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Robert Lovett HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	N J Beavan / Mohamed Mohamed
Headteacher	Wendy Sykes
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2006
School address	Barberry Avenue Chatham ME5 9TF
Telephone number	01634 861794
Fax number	01634 681165

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak a first language other than English are both significantly lower than average. A much higher than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school hosts a unit for seven pupils with physical disabilities. The school holds the Active Mark for its promotion of a healthy lifestyle and the Inclusive School's Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It has some good features that make pupils very proud of their school and they talk about it with zeal. The high quality of displays and artwork in corridors and classrooms contribute to the sense that this is a well-ordered and cared for school, where everyone takes pride in their community. Most parents and carers express positive views about the school. Many are pleased that pupils are well prepared for grammar school selection and the proportion of pupils who are successful is above average. However, a few feel that standards could be higher and inspectors agree.

Pupils are polite, helpful and friendly and say they feel very safe and greatly enjoy their lessons. They value the opportunity to contribute to the life of the school and willingly assume responsibilities such as acting as play leaders and leading discussion groups in assembly. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The school has a strong ethos of inclusion and mutual support so that all pupils feel an important part of the school community. Pastoral support is particularly strong while the monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory and improving. The new system for tracking the progress of individual pupils is beginning to have a positive impact on their achievement. It is not yet being used to match work closely enough to their differing capabilities or monitor the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school's monitoring suggests the proportion which is good is increasing and this view is supported by inspection evidence. Relationships are good and pupils are enthusiastic learners. They are eager to be involved in lessons and to answer questions. Pupils particularly value the opportunity to work with partners and engage in discussion. However, not all lessons exploit collaborative learning opportunities sufficiently. In the best lessons there is a real sense of fun and enjoyment, which results in a good pace of work and high levels of achievement. If standards are to rise further, and the school's ambitions are to be realised, the quality of teaching will need to be more consistently good.

Standards in English and mathematics are average and during their time in the school pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards in science are below average. However, over time the pattern of attainment has been erratic, with significant variation in standards in individual subjects. Too few of the more-able pupils have succeeded in reaching the higher Level 5. This is because work is not always sufficiently challenging. As the quality of teaching improves there are indications that standards are rising. The best marking is good at telling pupils what they are doing well and in celebrating success. It is less consistent in telling pupils what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The relatively new leadership team has not had sufficient time to have a significant impact on standards. Through the provision of better information from the headteacher, the governing body is increasingly able to hold the school to account. Governors know that standards could be higher and are committed to help bring this about. The school's improvement plan has a good focus on raising standards. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science and ensure that more pupils reach the higher Level 5.

- Make more effective use of data on pupils' progress to track how well groups of pupils are doing and match work more closely to their differing abilities.
- Raise the quality of teaching by sharing best practice to make learning more exciting and interesting and to ensure the marking of work consistently indicates how pupils can improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

According to the school's records, most pupils enter Year 3 with standards that are broadly average. During their time in school they make satisfactory progress overall but the most rapid progress is in Years 5 and 6. The school's recent tracking data indicate that pupils' progress is accelerating but it is too early to see the impact of this on standards. While standards are broadly average, this conceals erratic performance across subjects and from year to year. In the 2008 national tests pupils in Year 6 did best in mathematics. Teacher assessments indicate that in 2009 pupils in Year 6 will do less well in mathematics and better in English. Standards in science are below average and should be higher. While the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory, too few more-able pupils are reaching the higher Level 5.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they receive appropriate support in the classroom and from the special educational needs coordinator. Pupils who speak a first language other than English also make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly, polite and have respect for each other and the adults that work with them. They behave well, but are ambitious to improve further. As one boy explained, 'Behaviour is pretty good, but it could be a bit better.' Pupils are very supportive of each other, contributing to the friendly, caring ethos that exists within the school. By the time they leave the school pupils are mature and have developed positive attitudes to learning and life that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and for the future. Pupils say that they really enjoy their education and most parents agree. They say that the teachers care for them and that they feel very safe at school. This is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils develop a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles as they move through the school. Older pupils are able to explain clearly how certain foods contribute to a healthy diet and the importance of regular exercise. Pupils, particularly older pupils, play an important role in the running of the school, for example by acting as school receptionists at lunchtimes and leading school assemblies. They enjoy supporting local and national charities; as one girl said, 'We do lots of fun things to raise money.' Pupils have a good awareness that people have different beliefs and are increasingly aware about cultural diversity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but sometimes the expectations teachers have of their pupils lack sufficient ambition. In consequence, work is not always matched sufficiently closely to pupils' differing abilities, especially the most able.

In lessons seen, all teaching was at least satisfactory, some was good and one lesson was outstanding. In many lessons teachers use interactive whiteboards well to enliven teaching and learning. In the best lessons learning intentions are shared and discussed at the beginning of lessons to ensure that pupils know what they are to learn and how they can assess their progress. Where teaching is less successful the pace of learning is too slow. This is because, while pupils are eager to learn, listen well and work hard, teaching sometimes lacks excitement and a sense of adventure. Sometimes there is an over-reliance on worksheets, which do not always match well with the learning intention. In good lessons teachers use questioning well to assess progress, while in the very best, teachers use a range of questions to encourage pupils to reflect on their answers and to consolidate their learning. In an outstanding literacy lesson the teacher used skilfully targeted questions to ensure all pupils joined in and levels of engagement and enjoyment were high.

Marking is variable. Good marking is regular and detailed. Some is closely linked to what pupils are expected to learn. It sets high expectations, tells pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, but this is not consistent across all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and results in pupils making satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science. Provision for information and communication technology is good and pupils are well prepared to use their skills across the curriculum. There is good provision for the wider curriculum and provision for subjects such as French and design and technology is good. There are a large number of after-school clubs such as Korfbal, French, Dutch, choir and aerobics. These clubs are well attended and much enjoyed by pupils. They represent a significant strength and make a good contribution to pupils' development. Provision for sport and music across the curriculum is also good.

The curriculum for physical education, and personal, social and health education, promotes a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The curriculum promotes a satisfactory understanding of other cultures and ways of life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a safe, caring environment where all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, can develop well. Safeguarding is secure. All the adults who work in the school contribute to ensuring the safety and well-being of the pupils. The school is very inclusive and this is reflected not only in the good support that the adults provide, but also in the way pupils support and behave towards each other; one girl said, 'Your friends watch

out for you.' In the classroom, teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are able to learn alongside their peers.

The progress of individual pupils is now carefully tracked and targets based on this help pupils to know what they need to aim for. However, the inconsistency in the quality of marking means that pupils do not always know clearly enough what they must do next to further improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a good focus on providing support and encouragement to all pupils and in promoting their well-being. As a result equality of opportunity is well promoted and there is a strong ethos of inclusion. The senior leadership team has recently introduced a range of strategies to raise standards and these are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning but it is too early to be able to judge their impact on standards. These strategies include more rigorous monitoring of teaching and holding teachers to account for pupils' progress. Subject leadership is developing well but teachers responsible for English and mathematics have not had sufficient opportunity to monitor standards. The school's leaders recognise that standards should be higher and appropriate plans are in place intended to bring about improvement. The relatively new system for tracking the progress of pupils is already having an impact on accelerating progress. This is because teachers are more aware of how well pupils are doing. They can more quickly provide additional support for those who are falling behind and extra challenge for those who are doing well. This system is not yet being used effectively to track the progress of some groups of pupils.

While some parents and carers feel that standards could be higher, most are very positive about the school. Comments such as 'staff encourage all to reach their personal potential' and 'the school takes into account individual needs very well' are typical of many.

The governing body is satisfactory and improving. Governors are developing a good understanding of how to measure pupils' achievement and are increasingly able to hold the school to account.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

20 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Horsted Junior School, Barberry Avenue, Chatham, ME5 9TF

Thank you for making me and my colleagues so welcome when we visited your school recently. The things you told us helped us to get to know your school better and made a valuable contribution to the inspection. Your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education.

It is obvious that you are very proud of your school and that you enjoy being there. You told us that everyone gets on well together and that it is a very caring school. We agree that yours is a friendly and welcoming school. We were impressed by your politeness, good behaviour and willingness to help each other. You also told us that you enjoy the wide range of after-school clubs and we agree they make a good contribution to the curriculum. The school is successful in promoting sport and music and it was lovely hearing Year 5 singing the medley of Beatles songs so enthusiastically in assembly. Because you enjoy learning you have positive attitudes to your lessons and you are eager to learn new things. You said you feel really safe and valued as an individual. This is an aspect of the school which is strong. We agree the school is very good at encouraging friendship, responsibility and tolerance.

We are suggesting some things the school can do to improve further.

- Ensure standards are higher in English, mathematics and science and that more of you reach Level 5.
- Make better use of the new systems which track how well you are doing to see how well groups of you are making progress. This system can also help your teachers make sure the work they set you is just right. You can help them by telling them if the work is too easy or too hard.
- Make more of your work exciting and enjoyable and ensure that, when teachers mark your work, they let you know how you can do better.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer term and have an enjoyable summer holiday.

Yours faithfully

Robert Lovett

Her Majesty's Inspector