

# Headcorn Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118291
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	339184
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gavin Jones

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>	222
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jack Keller
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cliff Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Kings Road Headcorn Ashford TN27 9QT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 891289
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Approximately 50% of the inspectors' time was spent looking at learning. The inspectors visited twelve lessons taught by seven different teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school development plan, records of lesson observations, safeguarding material, records of assessment and welfare arrangements. Questionnaires were received from 85 parents and carers.

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

- the effectiveness of the school in raising standards in mathematics
- how successfully teachers use assessment, including marking, to promote learning further
- how successful the school is at promoting community cohesion beyond the local community
- the quality of leadership and management of subject leaders.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school in which the school population is almost entirely from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low, while the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Due to the number of pupils designated to enter the school each year being reduced from 40 to 30, Years 5 and 6 are still in mixed-year groups, otherwise all classes are single-age groups. There has been some considerable turbulence in staffing over the last two years. The school has a range of awards including Investors in People, Activemark and Sportsmark.

**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

### Main findings

Headcorn provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Some aspects of the school's work are good. The school has recently come through a good deal of turbulence in its staffing. This has, until recently, had an effect on progress in some classes and has resulted in changes in staff, some of whom had key roles. From a position of strength in its results in 2007, when attainment in both English and mathematics was significantly above average, results fell in 2008. By 2009, English was once again significantly higher than average. Currently, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is above average, as evidenced in the school's tracking and class books. The current Year 6, who started out in school with levels of skills below those expected for their age, show good progress in their learning and are achieving well. Following changes in staffing at Key Stage 1, pupils are now making good progress, although progress in mathematics is less than in reading and writing.

A strength of the school is its Early Years Foundation Stage, where children receive a good start to their education, preparing them well for the next stage. Equally, the quality of the school's teaching assistants is good, with many of them having been encouraged to train for higher grades in their work. As a result, the care and support that all assistants give to individual and small groups of pupils is of good quality. Assistants work well alongside teachers in lessons that are typified with good planning and work directed at the range of abilities in the classes. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, behave well and show good attitudes to their learning, which aids their progress. Although teachers' marking is sometimes focused on giving pupils pointers for improvement, this is not consistent and pupils are not always made aware of how they can improve.

A number of improvements and innovations have been made in the recent past, but events in school have, from time to time, taken the school's focus off further improvements in order to deal with changes in staffing and issues in a particular year group. For example, while recognising improvements in teaching and learning, the development of community cohesion has not moved forward substantially. Again, the role of subject leaders, an issue at the last inspection, had begun to develop, but changes in staffing and a lack of meaningful opportunities to further develop leadership skills has caused the process to stall. Self-evaluation is largely accurate but details of monitoring to inform judgements on leadership and management are sparse. With the headteacher's imminent retirement, the school's capacity to improve further can only be seen as satisfactory until a more definite picture of the school's future leadership is known.

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

- Provide leaders with greater opportunities to fulfil their roles and raise attainment in their subjects by:
  - ensuring that they carry out lesson observations in order to confirm the strengths and areas for development in teaching
  - checking assessment data regularly in order to support accurate target setting
  - discussing information noted in monitoring with staff and governors alike.
- Help pupils gain a clearer understanding of what life is like in different communities both in the United Kingdom and further afield by:
  - ensuring that the audit and strategy for community cohesion drives the school's thinking
  - pursuing different links with another school in a different setting in this country and with schools abroad.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

In Years 1 and 2, where attainment fell from 2008 to 2009 in reading, writing and mathematics, a new teacher in Year 2 has already managed to recoup some lost ground in reading, for example. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 are making better progress than in the previous year. All groups achieve well and enjoy their learning, which is clear from the work seen in classes, in books and in the school's assessment data. Good progress was seen in a Year 5/6 lesson where pupils were using 'cause and effect' language and also in a Year 4 lesson in which pupils were using a computer program modelling effects of their actions and instructions on screen. The outcomes for different groups of pupils are also good. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support enabling them to keep pace with learning and make good gains in understanding, as do those who demonstrate the potential to gain higher levels.

Many facets of pupils' personal development are also good. They enjoy school which is reflected in their good attendance. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and recorded incidents are rare. Older pupils have some opportunities to show enterprise and workplace skills when they make items for sale at charitable events. They also have good basic skills and show that they can attend regularly. They behave well in class, with excellent behaviour seen in one particular lesson. Their good behaviour supports their learning well. Pupils have a good knowledge of how to lead healthy lives and many take advantage of the wide range of sporting activities after school each day. Many pupils take initiatives in fund-raising, most recently for the earthquake appeal. However, their overall understanding of life in other parts of the United Kingdom and internationally is not as strong which restricts the contribution they can make to the wider community.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</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>3</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>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Almost all lessons observed were good. Relationships are strong and there is an atmosphere of interest shown as pupils clearly want to do well for their teachers. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities in lessons. Discussion is seen as important, not only with the teacher but between pupils. Many teachers make good use of their interactive whiteboards, focusing pupils' attention and providing links to resources on the internet, such as in an assembly where a computer program was used to zoom in on Mecca in relation to discussing Islam. Links with previous learning are not always made clear to pupils, in order to establish a smooth transition from lesson to lesson. At the same time, as class teachers do not have access to ongoing assessment, they do not use this type of information to fine tune their daily plans. Key skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and groupings by ability for mathematics in Years 5 and 6 are having a positive effect.

There are not enough links between subjects to support learning and the school is in the process of re-examining its curriculum in order to build in more links between subjects, more creative opportunities and a clear development of skills which can be used across the subject boundaries. At the present time, the development of skills and their clear progression across year groups is not in place. The school plans a wide range of visits, many of which support first-hand learning and understanding well.

The school uses a good system with which to record regular assessments in order to

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<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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ensure that no pupils are in danger of falling behind. While this information is kept by the headteacher, it is used by class teachers at regular review meetings to ensure pupils are on-track to make sufficient progress in their learning. There were some examples of marking not giving pupils enough help in knowing what their next steps in learning might be, but equally there were some very good examples of where this was positive. The school ensures good care in the transition between classes and when pupils are ready to leave the school. While the care shown by the school to its pupils is good, on occasions, parents and carers do not always feel that they have complete information about particular incidents that affect their children. A number of parents and carers note this in the questionnaires. The inspection agrees that some isolated incidents have given parents and carers a negative overall picture of the quality of the school's care for their children. This is not seen by the inspection team as being the case. The school has worked successfully to support improvements in attendance which is now firmly good.

*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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders' ambition and drive towards improvement are satisfactory, although recently there are signs of more progress. Significant staff changes in recent times have meant that some initiatives had slowed and, in order to achieve some goals, the headteacher had taken on too much. However, by doing this, the school has been successful in stabilising the budget, improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising the profile of teaching assistants. As staffing has become more settled, good plans are in place to ensure a greater involvement of senior staff, particularly in monitoring, and to review the curriculum to make it more vibrant. However, these are at an early stage and their impact is still somewhat limited. Although the school keeps parents and carers informed about the main events on the school calendar, its relationships with a particular group of parents and carers has not been positive, especially in recent months.

The school has made a good start at promoting community cohesion, but has not extended the horizons of the pupils with more links with other pupils nationally or internationally. Although the school has very few pupils from different vulnerable groups, it provides good equality of opportunity for all, ensuring there is no discrimination. Gifted and talented pupils are supported both in school and through links with secondary schools, while settled Romany children make the same progress as other

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children. The school has thorough safeguarding procedures. Staff are trained and updated, governors are up to date in their training, and risk assessments are carried out. Governors are keen to support the school, have made a good start in gathering their own information and have a good base of skills to draw upon. However, a clear plan for the review of the school's well-organised policies is not in place.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage promotes the development of young children well and is a strong feature of the school. Children are making better progress year on year, due to the range of opportunities provided for them and put into effect by a small but effective team of practitioners. The accommodation is bright and welcoming and benefits from a covered outside area. This allows children to move both in and out safely without being restricted. The youngest children are already confident, articulate and very happy to explain to inspectors what they are doing, whether it is making a tail for the dragon display or creating a treasure map. They cooperate well in activities and share equipment and, while they play a role in their own learning, this is not yet a dynamic one.

Children enjoy their learning as their curriculum is exciting and their teachers, including teaching assistants, provide good levels of instruction and support. Children are quite happy to follow their own lines of learning or equally to listen carefully to tasks set by their teachers. Assessments are regular and parents are kept informed of progress. When they first enter school, children's literacy skills are not as good as other skills, but by the end of the year, a large majority of children have surpassed the targets set for



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them in many areas of learning.

The setting is nominally managed by the headteacher, with the class teacher's role being too loosely defined in leadership terms. In spite of this, the leader in the classroom has established a setting in which children and adults work very well together, with enjoyment and progress being high on the list of successes.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

Eight out of ten parents and carers felt their children were safe in school, were helped to lead a healthy lifestyle and enjoyed school. The inspection team endorses these views and other positive views expressed. A significant minority of parents and carers were concerned about behaviour, did not feel their concerns were recognised and as a result did not think the school was well led. However, these almost exclusively relate to a legacy from individual incidents which are now largely resolved but which, nevertheless, have left a history of discontent. The inspection team agrees that these incidents clearly soured relationships with the school and for some parents; this matter has evidently not yet been resolved.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Headcorn 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 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 222 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	47	40	47	4	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	41	48	32	38	6	7	5	6
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	26	50	59	9	11	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	38	35	41	12	14	5	6
The teaching is good at this school	28	33	38	45	13	15	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	28	41	48	11	13	5	6
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	31	52	61	6	7	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)	14	16	48	56	10	12	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	27	46	54	11	13	4	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	11	42	49	23	27	10	12
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	14	49	58	15	18	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	15	18	39	46	19	22	9	11
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	33	41	48	12	14	2	2

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.**



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Headcorn Primary School, Headcorn, TN27 9QT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school the other day. We enjoyed meeting you. You were very polite and helped us by telling us about your school. We think that your school is good. Here are some of the things we found out.

- Children get off to a good start in Reception and make good progress.
- Standards are particularly good in English by the time pupils leave.
- You feel safe in school, know what a healthy lifestyle is and your behaviour is good.
- The school safeguards you well.
- Teaching is good and you enjoy learning.
- All groups of children have an equal chance of success.

There are some things that your school can do to make it even better:

- Give teachers who are responsible for particular subjects more opportunities to check on their subjects across the school in order to raise standards further.
- Help you gain a wider understanding of what life is like in communities in another part of the United Kingdom and in countries overseas.

We know that you will continue to work hard and keep up the good level of attendance.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Gavin Jones

Lead Inspector

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