

Hersden Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118358
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	335171
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Georgina Glover
Headteacher	Simon O'Keefe
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2008
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Introduction

When Hersden School was inspected in November 2008, it was judged to require special measures. This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors at no notice. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, school improvement partner, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at various documentation, including: the school development plan; monitoring records of teaching and learning, safeguarding policies and procedures; school tracking data to show the progress pupils are making; and governors' papers

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

- how effectively assessment information is used to set appropriate challenge for all pupils, increase the pace of learning and remedy previous underachievement
- how well pupils understand what they need to do next to improve their work and how they are involved in assessing their own progress
- the effectiveness of all leaders in monitoring and evaluating the school's work in helping to eliminate identified weaknesses
- the extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' differing needs, abilities and interests
- the effectiveness of actions taken to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Information about the school

A very large majority of pupils at this smaller than average primary school are of White British heritage. Others represent a range of different ethnicities and very few speak languages other than English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, and most of these have significant emotional and social learning needs. The school has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Reception class. An independent private nursery shares the school site and is subject to a separate inspection.

When it was inspected in March 2007 the school was given a notice to improve. Significant improvement was required in relation to the standards and achievement of the pupils in Years 1 to 6 in English, mathematics and science. A monitoring visit in November 2008 raised serious concerns. Since April 2007 the school has experienced a significant number of changes in leadership, staffing and governance. The school was led by an acting head of school and an acting executive headteacher from Sturry Primary School. The implementation of a Federation in February 2009 meant these posts became permanent and governance was shared between the two schools. The completion of an on-site Children's Centre is expected early next 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

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

This is a satisfactory school. The leadership of the executive headteacher and head of school is impressive and they have driven rapid improvements in key aspects of the school's work. One of the most significant improvements is to pupils' behaviour, which is now good. The federation has breathed new life into the school. Leaders are involved in the self-evaluation process at every level and they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result they have a good capacity to improve further. The strong focus on improving pupils' achievement, and prompt action taken to tackle identified weaknesses, has led to substantially improved standards. Children join the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge significantly below those expected for their age and by the end of Year 6 pupils attain average standards. The teaching team is enthusiastic, and frequently good teaching and learning is helping pupils make up so much past lost ground. While pupils generally make satisfactory progress, the school recognises that in Years 1 and 2 progress slows, partly due to variation in the quality of teaching. Increasingly, pupils understand what they need to do next to improve their work and they assess their own and each other's work. Even so, teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to plan learning tasks and activities that closely match pupils' different learning needs and challenge them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported, which is why they make good progress from their starting points. The school's robust systems for tracking pupils' progress in English and mathematics and the rigorous way in which senior leaders monitor each pupils' performance and the quality of teaching, ensure good-quality support is provided to tackle any underachievement.

Pupils' enjoyment is reflected in their improved punctuality and attendance, but despite the school's best efforts a few remain persistently absent. The good care, support and guidance shown to pupils from all adults is mirrored in every aspect of the school, from the way older pupils look after and care for younger ones in the mixed-age classes and at playtimes, to the focused support adults provide for those at risk. Pupils say, 'learning is now fun and we feel safer'. The school is adapting the curriculum so that it improves from its current satisfactory position and more fully meets pupils' needs, interests and abilities. Extra-curricular clubs and the extensive sports partnerships are enriching the curriculum. Pupils are proud of their school and their responsibilities as playground leaders and school councillors. The federation has strengthened the wide range of good partnerships to promote learning and support the well-being of pupils and it is working hard to engage parents and the wider community in its work.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the attainment and progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 improves in English, mathematics and science by:
 - checking the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously and using the findings to improve pupils' learning further
 - ensuring that teachers' have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Ensure teachers' use assessment information when planning learning tasks and activities so that they more closely match pupils' individual learning needs and provide greater challenge.
- Improve the attendance of the few pupils who are persistently absent by:
 - building on the links with parents to discourage the taking of holidays in pupils' learning time
 - working more closely with external agencies to ensure that steps taken to improve attendance have maximum impact.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the time they leave in Year 6 standards are broadly average. This is a significant improvement on the position found by inspectors in November 2008. Previously, pupils made limited progress and standards were significantly below those found nationally, which reflected substantial underachievement by pupils. The school's good focus on ensuring all now achieve as well as they possibly can has resulted in rising standards with no significant variations between groups of pupils. This is confirmed in the school's rigorous tracking data and in lessons seen and work sampled by inspectors. However, the rate of progress slows to satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, a result of less effective teaching. This inconsistency affects pupils' achievement because their needs are not met as well as they are elsewhere in the school. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6, where the pace of learning recovers and picks up speed because teaching here is more consistently good.

Pupils now enjoy school, as seen in the improved attendance and punctuality of all but the few who are persistently absent. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as is their behaviour. They get on well together. This is a significant change; as one pupil said, 'there used to be lots of fights, now we play together.' Pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem has improved significantly because they feel valued. However, their cultural development is relatively weaker. They clearly enjoy each others' company and have lots of fun at playtimes, whether skipping or rehearsing their street dance. They really know how to keep safe, using information and communication technology, swimming or talking about 'stranger danger'. Their awareness of the importance of staying healthy, while satisfactory, is still developing. They work well in groups and teams and are prepared adequately for the next stage of

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their education. They are very active in the school and local community, raise funds, helped 'clean up Hersden' and are fund-raising for an adventure playground. They take their responsibilities seriously as play leaders or house captains. The school council has chosen new play equipment, and is involved in plans for a salad bar and healthy loyalty cards.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

New staff, training and coaching from within the federation has resulted in improved teaching, all of which is at least satisfactory and much that is good. Typically, learning objectives are specific and pupils have a greater understanding of what they are learning and why. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to check whether pupils have successfully met the learning objective. Teachers have accurate information about pupils' progress and their potential, but do not always use this to match work at the right level. This is especially evident in Years 1 and 2. Very good relationships, mutual respect and at times enthusiastic teaching ensure pupils are eager to learn. Usually lessons are well paced and capture pupils' interest. Marking mostly makes it clear what

¹ 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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pupils need to do to improve work. Pupils are encouraged to mark their own and each other's work and this helps their understanding. Pupils' targets are displayed where they can easily be seen and checked. Good use of information and communication technology is a feature of many lessons. For example, Years 3 and 4 enjoyed researching synonyms and spelling patterns, while Years 5 and 6, after watching a video about the artist Banksey, debated if the school should have a graffiti wall.

The greatly improved curriculum is still developing to make it more creative. Focused reading and letters and sounds sessions contribute well to pupils' achievement. Medium and short-term planning in several subjects is not yet sharp enough to cater for different groups and abilities. Pupils particularly enjoy the themed days and weeks from Darwin to The Victorians. In recognition of its work, the school holds both Activemark and Sportsmark awards and is involved in a Canterbury School Sports Partnership. The breakfast club is growing and pupils say they love all the different clubs from tag rugby and choir to cooking. The strong focus on pupils' personal development has considerably raised pupils' feelings, values and respect for themselves and each other. The federation has enabled further enrichment through joint activities such as making a Christmas CD and a Year 6 residential in Cornwall.

A real strength of Hersden is the way it cares for, supports and values all. Pupils freely talked about the many positive changes: 'we were taught to be shouted at', 'we didn't get much work done', 'it was scary' and 'it's great now'. Provision for vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. One pupil said, 'the individual tuition is good; it helps those that need it and means we can get on with our learning. It has made such a difference'. Previously a high proportion of pupils had emotional and behavioural difficulties that were not being addressed. They are now well managed and supported, resulting in significant improvements all round. Regular assessment and pupil progress meetings lead to well-placed, targeted support and guidance for pupils and their families. Leaders are now tracking pupils' personal development against national guidelines so that they can better support them. Rewards, 'attendance Ted' and 'punctuality pup', alongside much considerable hard work with pupils and parents have successfully improved attendance and punctuality for many pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

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The executive headteacher and head of school have been instrumental in securing improvement. The quality of senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning has improved. Their shared ambition and drive is why the school has improved so rapidly and why it has a good capacity to improve further. Restructuring across the federation led to new 'leaders of learners'. This knowledgeable and enthusiastic group work in partnership across both schools. They support and check teachers' planning, assessments and pupils' work. Self-evaluation is sharp and many effective systems support improvements. This is the case with behaviour, which was at an unsafe level a short while ago, assessment and staff development. Leaders have worked hard to re-establish positive relationships with parents, through six-weekly reports on their child's progress, and text reminders of functions and events to keep in contact, although a small 'hard-to-reach group' remain a challenge. Partnerships with the local authority, external agencies and local schools are strong and beneficial to pupils and their families. The restructured governing body has had bespoke training and is more involved in evaluating the school's progress. Governors have a better understanding of the strengths and priorities and challenge the school's performance. All leaders actively promote equal opportunities and tackle any discrimination, and all safeguarding procedures are robust. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion within its local area but has yet to fully develop the national and global dimensions.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
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Staff work well together and are skilled at helping children to learn from directed and self-chosen activities. Children settle quickly, become confident and enjoy learning because they are encouraged to make independent choices and can organise themselves. They play together well, take turns, share and listen to each other patiently, help get out resources when making Christmas cards, and move freely between set activities. They shared their excitement when shining a torch into a dark area to explore shadows. Teaching is particularly skilful at linking sounds and letters, which is why the children make such good progress in a short time. Children start with lower skills than expected for their age in most areas of learning. There are signs of good early progress, especially in their personal and social emotional development, literacy, and language and number skills. One of the biggest leaps is in their creative development, seen in their super pictures of fireworks and funny bones. Assessment is good. Some resources such as the reading area look worn and the writing area would benefit from more stimulating resources to capture children's excitement for early writing. The spacious outdoor area is shared with the on-site Nursery but children cannot freely access this. Plans are in hand to improve access and to provide cover. The leadership model is good and enabling the new staff at Hersden to work with colleagues and share best practice within the federation.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

A recent school parent survey indicated that almost all parents were very supportive of the school's work. The majority recognised the many positive changes made recently.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hersden Primary School, Canterbury, CT3 4HS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us recently when we visited your school. We found you so friendly and well-behaved. The executive headteacher, head of school and all the staff are working really hard to improve your school. You told us how your school has got much better. We agree with you, and have judged your school to be satisfactory.

The youngest children now get off to a good start and by Year 6 you reach average standards. You are working hard and help each other. You told us all about making Anglo-Saxon purses, catching the rain to measure it and making and selling cakes to raise money for Pudsey Bear. We know you are now raising funds for your adventure playground and hope the Christmas CD sales help. Will you have a graffiti wall too? We are so pleased that you now feel safe and happy at school. You take your responsibilities very seriously and help in the local community and you have a growing sense of how to keep healthy. We agree with you that the school really does look after you well and wants to help you do your very best. Of course, there are always things to be done. We have asked your executive headteacher to help improve some things particularly and they are to:

- make sure those of you in Years 1 and 2 are helped to do your very best in English, mathematics and science
- check that teachers' use the information they have about how well you are doing so that they always set work for you at the right level
- improve the attendance of a few of you.

You can help, too; for a few of you attendance is not good enough because some parents let you stay at home or take holidays during your learning time. If you are not in school, you cannot learn. You cannot help it if you are ill, but try to come to school whenever you can. We hope the Christmas play is a great success!

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning

Additional Inspector

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