



# Lower Halstow Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118341  
**Local Authority** Kent  
**Inspection number** 291100  
**Inspection date** 13 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Michael Barron

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	School Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Lower Halstow
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Sittingbourne ME9 7ES
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01795 842344
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	130	<b>Fax number</b>	01795 842 552
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	P G Marshall
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Cathy Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2004		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Lower Halstow Primary School is a small primary school serving a rural area of Kent. Pupils are taught in five mixed age-group classes. Whilst most are of White British heritage, a very small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds or are the children of Travellers. Very few pupils have a first language other than English. The school has gone through a period of disruption and change since the last inspection. The building has been extensively modernised and the school has been led by a number of temporary executive and acting headteachers. The present substantive headteacher took up her position in January 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Lower Halstow is a satisfactory school, which gives pupils a sound start to their education. Leadership and management, criticised in the previous report, are now satisfactory. In the relatively short period of time since her appointment, the headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, has led the school with drive and determination and has gained the confidence of staff and governors, who share her clear vision for improving standards. Whilst some of the initiatives the headteacher has introduced have already led to improvements, for example in raising standards in reading, there are still several other areas in need of improvement and these include developing the role of subject leaders in order to make them an integral part of the school's leadership and management team and more responsible for raising standards and the quality of teaching in their subject areas.

Parents appreciate the caring environment the school offers their children and feel the school is improving after a period of instability. Pupils enjoy school and say they feel safe and happy. Their personal development is good and they say that the best thing about the school is the teachers and describe them as 'friendly' and 'helpful'. As a result, pupils work hard and try to do well. They display responsible attitudes, have a good community spirit and learn how to make sensible and healthy choices. They respect others, behave well and are prepared satisfactorily for their future life.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with average skills. They make satisfactory progress in response to sound teaching and reach the expected standards in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. The quality of teaching is also satisfactory throughout the rest of the school and ensures that most pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, the small number from minority ethnic backgrounds and Traveller learners, make satisfactory progress. Whilst standards in Year 6 are similar to those attained nationally, they are lower in mathematics than in either English or science. Pupils make less progress in this subject because not all teachers have enough expertise in the subject to teach it effectively.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is enriched by a range of additional activities that further develop pupils' skills and their enjoyment of learning. Whilst procedures for care, guidance and support are good overall and contribute to pupils' progress and their sense of well-being, the quality of marking is variable and does not always tell pupils how to improve their work. The governing body has developed its role well since the last inspection and now offers a satisfactory level of challenge and support to the school. Under the effective leadership of this headteacher, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve standards in mathematics by ensuring that all staff have adequate training to teach the subject effectively
- raise the quality and consistency of teaching by developing the monitoring responsibilities and effectiveness of subject leaders

- ensure teachers' marking consistently helps pupils to understand how to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall throughout the school and reflects the quality of teaching. Whilst standards attained by Year 6 pupils in the 2006 national tests were below the national average, standards in the present Year 6 have risen and are now close to the national average. The school has recently successfully introduced strategies to improve pupils' achievement in reading and writing, especially in Year 1 and Year 2. However, throughout the school, pupils' progress in mathematics, and in particular in developing problem-solving skills, lags behind their progress in other subjects. Recent improvements to the methods used to support pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have ensured that they now make the same progress in learning as other pupils.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy school. Their good attitudes, behaviour and relationships contribute to their well-being. They have developed a strong sense of community, and work and play well together. They have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit and are beginning to make informed choices about how they exercise, what to eat and how to stay safe. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils have a strong sense of identity with the school and proudly stated during discussions, 'It's our school'. However, the recently-formed school council is only just beginning to give pupils a more formal voice in school affairs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and their appreciation of the wider world is enhanced through visits to places of interest, including the British Museum. Residential visits provide pupils with experiences of life outside their locality, but pupils' understanding of the multi-cultural nature of modern British society could be further developed.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and provides children with activities which blend independent learning with teacher-directed tasks. Lessons are organised effectively and children feel safe and secure. As a result, they make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching throughout the rest of the school is variable, although satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned using a consistent whole-school format and teachers use a variety of approaches to make lessons interesting and keep pupils

attentive. However, several teachers lack the deep mathematical knowledge and expertise, and therefore the confidence, to teach the subject more than satisfactorily. This affects pupils' progress in this subject. Pupils are keen to learn and work hard although they do not always present their work well. The school has developed good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress but they are not yet used effectively enough to improve achievement. Teachers' marking varies and rarely gives pupils any real understanding of how to improve their work. Teaching assistants work well with teachers to contribute effectively to pupils' learning, especially in the Foundation Stage and when supporting pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The school's curriculum is well balanced and meets the needs and interests of pupils soundly. In the Foundation Stage, children are provided with an interesting range of experiences which generally reflect their needs in all areas of learning, but opportunities for them to develop skills associated with outdoor play are limited by the constraints of the Foundation Stage outdoor play area. Pupils in other year groups make satisfactory progress in building up skills in subjects such as literacy, science and ICT and this helps them to prepare soundly for the next stage of their education. Good planning and provision for personal, social and health education ensures that pupils are aware of the importance of fitness and well-being. Pupils are encouraged to feel valued as individuals and show respect towards adults and towards each other. Interesting visits and visitors to the school increase their enjoyment of learning. Pupils also have regular opportunities to take part in a range of popular and well supported out-of-school activities, including sports clubs.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Procedures for care, guidance and support are good overall and contribute to pupils' progress, sense of well-being and enjoyment of learning. Pupils feel safe and know whom to approach if they have a problem. Health and safety routines and risk assessments are fully in place. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Good quality care is evident in the school's focus on ensuring that every child matters, and child protection procedures are understood and followed by all staff. Good induction and transfer arrangements help pupils to settle quickly into new routines and pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds and Traveller children, receive an effective level of support. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work often consists of words of encouragement rather than telling pupils what they need to learn next. As a result, pupils are unsure of how to improve and this affects their progress

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is an effective leader who has a clear vision for the school and has ensured that the school has accurately analysed and evaluated its provision in order to identify what needs to be done in order to improve. She is well aware of the need to develop teachers' confidence and expertise in mathematics. However, the new initiatives she has already introduced have encouraged teachers to make lessons more relevant and interesting for all pupils and this has led to improvements in achievement, especially in English. Whilst middle managers are beginning to take on more responsibility for monitoring teaching and progress in their subject areas, this aspect of leadership and management is not yet embedded well enough to have had an impact on raising standards. The governing body has satisfactory links with the school. The school works closely with parents, seeking their views regularly. Links with external agencies such as specialist therapists support pupils' learning well, particularly for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. The school's accommodation has been greatly improved since the last inspection, except in the outdoor area for Foundation Stage children.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us feel very welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our day at Lower Halstow Primary School and especially enjoyed talking to some of you about your school and seeing you work in lessons.

Here are some of the things we particularly like about your school:

- we were impressed by how friendly and well behaved you are
- we thought your new school building was really nice
- we were also impressed by how much you seem to enjoy school
- we also like how your new headteacher and teachers take good care of you and work hard to make sure you do well.

We think your headteacher and teachers can do some things to make your school even better. We have asked them to:

- make sure you make better progress in mathematics by improving teachers' skills and confidence in the subject
- give more responsibility to the adults in charge of subjects so that they can help to improve teaching and your progress in all subjects
- make sure that when teachers mark your work, you get a better idea of what you have to do to improve.

You can help your school to get even better by continuing to work hard in lessons.

We wish you the very best for the future.