



Aycliffe Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118449
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291137
Inspection date 27 November 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Sudworth

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Davids Avenue
School category	Community		Dover
Age range of pupils	4-11		CT17 9HJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01304 202651
Number on roll (school)	110	Fax number	01304 225507
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	M Waite
		Headteacher	I Sheppard
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils in this four-class school are of White British heritage. Attainment on entry is below expectations. All classes have mixed-age groups, including a mixed Year 2/3 class. A staffing difficulty in the Year 4/5 class meant that a new teacher had taken over the class three weeks before the inspection began. A higher percentage of pupils than nationally are entitled to free school meals and a larger proportion than usual have learning difficulties or disabilities.

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 education with strengths in pupils' good personal development and the good care and guidance that the school offers its pupils. Parents are very appreciative of what the school does for their children and the good links it has with the community. A parent typically comments, 'The school has fantastic community links. The significance of every child, parent, carer and staff member's contribution is reflected in the school's ethos of working with, and for, the community.' The chair of the governing body ably leads the governors and has a deep commitment to the school.

Led by the headteacher's example, staff work well as a team and create a happy school with good relationships that help the pupils feel secure. As a result, pupils enjoy school, behave well and concentrate in lessons. Pupils' attendance has been below average despite the school's best efforts. This is mainly due to parents taking their children on holiday during term time. The family atmosphere in the school helps new pupils settle in well. Pupils' learning is enhanced through visits and links with other schools and by becoming involved in local issues such as environmental concerns. The school makes good provision to support those who find learning difficult and this boosts these pupils' confidence as members of the school community.

Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and attainment below average. When they first start school, children's skills are below those expected and weak in language and literacy and knowledge of the world. They achieve satisfactorily in the Reception class. Pupils achieve well in Years 2 and 3 and reach expected standards due to good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching, such as in the successful writing initiative in Year 2. The better teaching has resulted in improved test results in Year 2 in the last two years. This improvement has not yet had time to impact on results further up the school. Elsewhere, teaching is mainly satisfactory. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 4 to 6, though standards are below average in mathematics, where the subject leadership has not ensured that the pupils make enough progress. Standards in English, particularly in writing, are also below average. Year 6 pupils make good progress in reaching the expected standard in science. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who are very able make similar rates of progress to other pupils. Environmental influences affect pupils' speaking skills adversely but teachers do not take sufficient advantage of opportunities to develop speaking.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils undertake a broadly balanced range of work which is being developed so as to further their interests and skills. It is supported by a good programme of after school clubs for pupils which contributes effectively to the school's aim that pupils should live healthily and safely. The staff monitor pupils' progress regularly, but they do not make enough use of the assessments in order to help individual pupils understand how they can improve their work and get to the next level. Pupils are provided with a solid foundation for the next stage of their education and with good personal skills for life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Carry forward the successful initiative in writing in Year 2 and raise standards of writing in Years 4 to 6.
- Improve pupils' attainment in mathematics and the quality of leadership in the subject.
- Improve pupils' speaking skills and plan opportunities in different lessons to do this.
- Use the results from monitoring pupils' academic progress more effectively so that pupils themselves understand how they can reach the next level in learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average overall and achievement satisfactory. Foundation Stage children enter the school with standards that are below those normally expected and make satisfactory progress. By the end of the Reception Year, their attainments are generally below expectations, especially in their communication skills and knowledge and understanding of the world. Attainment is above expectations in their physical development. Pupils make good progress in their social development. Effective teaching has fostered pupils' good achievement in the Year 2 and 3 class in the last two years with improving results. Pupils often reach the expected standard, although reading is better than writing and few reach the higher level.

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall in Years 4 to 6. The good achievement of so many pupils in reaching the expected level in science is due to the emphasis on practical investigations. Their attainment in English, particularly in writing, and mathematics is below the national average despite a gradual improvement in results over time. Pupils find problem solving difficult because their language skills often do not enable them to grasp the intricacies of the problem. Able pupils and those with learning difficulties make similar rates of progress to other pupils. In general, pupils' speaking skills are below expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils understand right from wrong. They are polite, well behaved and courteous. Pupils enjoy school, have good attitudes to learning and collaborate well with others. Pupils have no significant concerns about bullying because it is infrequent and the 'playground friends group' is supportive and effective. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance is below that nationally. The school council is satisfactory and has made a few suggestions to improve the provision for pupils, such as the choice of play equipment. Pupils choose healthy food at lunchtime and they take part enthusiastically in after school activities, most notably in sport. They know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils make a significant contribution to the community, for example, they nominate and deliver

harvest parcels to the elderly. In their 'make a difference day' they organised a tea party and dance for the elderly. Their involvement in projects, such as tree planting locally, supports their appreciation of environmental issues. They develop good social skills through carrying out simple responsibilities, such as running the school Fruit Bar at playtime, which also contributes to their understanding of simple economics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some outstanding teaching seen in the Year 2/3 class. Drama was used very effectively in this lesson which really helped to stimulate the pupils' interest in a story that was being used very well to promote pupils' writing. Generally, however, teachers do not exploit enough opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills in lessons and styles of writing in different subjects. They manage pupils' behaviour well and set a good tone for learning, and so pupils try hard in lessons. Lessons are usually satisfactorily planned and paced. Teachers have sound skills in using interactive whiteboards. The pace and interest of lessons pick up dramatically when these boards are used well.

Teachers work hard to match activities to the different ages and capabilities in the mixed-age classes and use teaching assistants effectively to support pupils who find learning more difficult. This support enhances the self-esteem of pupils with learning difficulties well. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and the best comments, particularly, help the pupils to improve. The sharing of lesson intentions with pupils is satisfactory but teachers do not consistently make clear enough to pupils the gains in learning expected from the lesson. Consequently, pupils do not know precisely how well they have progressed with their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, including that in the Foundation Stage. Good features include the range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, which support pupils' healthy living. Recent successful initiatives are helping pupils to make improvements in the standards they reach in writing by the end of Year 2, though this has yet to extend to other parts of the school. The soundly organised curriculum caters satisfactorily for mixed-age classes, including the very able pupils and those with learning difficulties.

Links between subjects are increasingly enhancing pupils' creativity. However, not enough curriculum planning focuses on the development of pupils' speaking, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum to improve pupils' attainment in Years 4 to 6. Satisfactory and improving use is being made of information and communication technology in different lessons and which increases pupils' computer skills.

Local visits are used effectively to enhance pupils' experiences, such as to Dover Castle. A residential visit for older pupils supports their social development well. Links with a local conservation group foster effectively the pupils' environmental awareness. Visitors, such as the police and theatre groups, contribute to the increasingly effective provision for pupils' personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The staff have a very thorough personal knowledge of each child and use this to identify vulnerable pupils quickly. Pupils are confident that staff provide them with the help and guidance that they need in lessons and in response to their personal needs. Staff promote the self-esteem of pupils who have emotional and learning difficulties particularly well. The work of the family liaison officer is exceptional in supporting pupils and their families. All these efforts contribute to pupils' good attitudes to school, good relationships with others and their self-knowledge of keeping safe and living healthily.

Teachers take swift action to deal with pupils who are upset. The specially equipped room to soothe pupils when experiencing severe emotional outburst fulfils its purpose successfully. The very good counseling arrangements for pupils with the most serious emotional problems assist pupils well in coping with their particular difficulties. The school uses additional support from outside agencies successfully.

Staff track pupils' academic progress regularly but not enough use is yet made of the information gained to help individuals know what they must do to move on in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the school is well focused on pupils' personal development and the well-being of learners. The school gives very careful attention to meeting the personal needs of individuals so that none is left out or disadvantaged. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate. The thorough school improvement plan helps staff understand where further improvements are needed, though initiatives have not always been followed through rigorously enough to bring about the necessary improvements. The school rightly recognises that more needs to be done to improve the academic guidance pupils receive.

Checks on lessons are resulting in moderate improvements to teaching and pupils' learning. Staff absence has caused some disruption but the headteacher has managed emergency measures well. Sampling the quality and standards of pupils' work over time has been regular but not consistently rigorous. These activities correctly identified the need to improve standards of writing throughout the school and led to successful improvements to improve writing in Years 1 and 2. However, this has not yet impacted successfully on improvements in the rest of the school. Weakness in the leadership

and monitoring of mathematics has meant that insufficient progress has been made in Years 4 to 6 in improving mathematics provision and standards. By contrast, science attainment has improved considerably as a result of a consistent effort to provide more investigative opportunities for pupils.

The governing body supports the school well, but its role as critical friend and its ability to provide informed challenge are not well developed. The chair is particularly effective in carrying out her role and has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and has a sound capacity to improve further.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

¹ 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

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 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	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	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 your warm welcome when we visited your school and telling us about your work and what you do. Most of you clearly enjoy school. You certainly behave well and we noticed how polite you are. You try hard with your work. We were very interested in your links with other schools and the elderly in the area, and your environmental work, such as when you plant trees. All these things are helping your development as young people and this is good. The school gives you a satisfactory education. Teachers are trying to improve your lessons so that more of them are as good as the most interesting ones. You clearly enjoy the extra activities after school, some of which contribute to your aim to live healthily and safely.

Most of you are making satisfactory progress; for those of you in Years 2 and 3, it is good. The school's test results have improved in the last two years in Year 2 but for pupils in Years 4 to 6 progress is too slow in mathematics and writing. We have asked the teachers to make sure that you improve on this and also to provide more opportunities for all of you to improve your speaking skills. You can help in this yourselves by reading more when you are at home because reading helps with your use of words.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Your headteacher and staff take very good care of you and you feel able to talk to them if you have a problem. They check on your progress regularly but we have asked them to make better use of results so that each of you knows clearly how you can improve your work in English and mathematics and reach the next level.

We wish you all well for the future and hope that you will work hard to achieve your ambitions.