



Eastchurch Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118644
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291197
Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007
Reporting inspector Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	First	School address	Warden Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Eastchurch
Age range of pupils	4–9		Sheerness ME12 4EJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01795 880279
Number on roll (school)	303	Fax number	01795 880868
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ian Goodwin
		Headteacher	Pauline Shipley
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

Age group 4–9	Inspection dates 17–18 January 2007	Inspection number 291197
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

A purpose built nursery was added to the school in 2006 offering 52 part-time places equally split between morning and afternoon sessions. Attainment on entry is well below that expected, with children's language and communication, and personal and social skills being particularly weak. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. A substantial number of pupils join the school in Years 3 and 4. The school has gained the status of an eco-school because of the high emphasis that has been placed on environmental issues.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features, in which pupils flourish and make good progress. This results from good leadership and management, effective teaching and learning and pupils' good personal development.

Achievement is good as children start school with attainment well below average. Although they leave at the end of Year 4 with below average standards they are close to those expected and that represents good progress in relation to their starting point. Small classes and high quality teaching enable children to make good progress in the Foundation Stage, significantly so in their personal and social development. As a consequence, although not yet achieving at the expected level in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1, they are well prepared for subsequent learning bearing in mind their starting point. Pupils, including the significant number with learning difficulties, continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2, further reducing early shortfalls in literacy and mathematics. Even so, standards remain below average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 with too few achieving at the higher levels. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 also make good progress and by the end of Year 4 overall standards are only just below the expected level. However, overall performance at this stage has been affected in recent years by the high number of pupils joining these classes, many with learning difficulties, as well as the small numbers of identified more able pupils.

At the heart of the school is a Christian ethos that cherishes and values each pupil as an individual. Care, support and guidance are good with all staff being committed to pupils' well-being. Pupils feel safe and secure in school and say they enjoy their lessons because teachers make them interesting. Relationships at all levels are excellent and this has a positive impact on learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school although their attendance is below average. This is because there are some parents who do not send them to school regularly enough. A wide range of visits and visitors effectively enriches the good curriculum. It is planned well to develop pupils' creative talents as well as their academic ones. The view of one parent that 'children have some amazing opportunities and experiences that go far beyond our expectations', sums up the overwhelmingly positive views of others. However, there are insufficient opportunities for children to write at length or to be involved in problem solving activities in mathematics. Leadership and management have a clear view of the school's performance, which is reflected in their accurate self-evaluation. There are thorough procedures to check the progress that pupils make. Sometimes, though, the information collected is not used effectively to show pupils, especially the more able, how to improve their work. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The track record of the school in recent years shows it has good capacity to make any necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by providing more opportunities for writing at length and in mathematics by better developing pupils' problem solving skills.

- Ensure all pupils, particularly the more able, are effectively challenged.
- Strengthen efforts to encourage a significant minority of parents to send their children to school regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because of good quality teaching and learning throughout the school. This enables them to progress from levels of attainment that are well below average on entry to standards that are close to those expected by the end of Year 4. In the Foundation Stage, the emphasis on developing children's weak language, communication and social skills is successful in preparing them for the demands of learning when they enter Year 1. In Years 1 to 4, pupils make good progress in acquiring basic skills in language and literacy and mathematics. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and refine these skills by being able to write at length and be involved in mathematical problem solving activities. This is an important contributory factor in too few pupils achieving the higher levels in writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well as a result of the extra support they are given.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and respond well to the calm, positive atmosphere and excellent relationships. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is exemplary. Pupils' self-esteem and confidence grow because they regularly celebrate together the good things they have done in assemblies and classroom discussions. There is a good awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity, one child explaining that they had advised the staff to stop eating chocolate biscuits because they were unhealthy! Residential visits provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their social skills. They also develop a good awareness of the community through activities such as the excellent eco-school activities and art projects. Although attendance is below average it has improved over the last year because of initiatives put in place by the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They willingly take on responsibilities to help the smooth running of the school such as being a member of the school council and managing paper recycling and energy monitoring. They can also become 'buddies' and 'Aces', encouraging the younger pupils to share and play together. Pupils are suitably prepared for the world of work in the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In the Foundation Stage, activities are practical and stimulating and geared to improving children's low language and social skills. This was seen when children in the Nursery were working collaboratively in small groups and talking excitedly when making 'bird pudding' to feed birds in the school grounds. Learning in Years 1 to 4 builds well on these firm foundations and so pupils make good progress. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning intentions, which are routinely shared with pupils. Teachers give clear instructions and check carefully that pupils understand what is expected of them. The teaching and support provided for those with learning difficulties and disabilities are good, enabling them to achieve well. Relationships are excellent, and all teachers manage pupils' behaviour positively and very effectively. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning. Staff do not always make effective use of assessment information to guide pupils to improve their work, especially the more able. Classrooms are stimulating environments for learning, with celebrations of pupils' work and wall displays of high quality that provide information and guidance to pupils in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Whilst ensuring that enough time is provided for basic skills to be taught, the school also offers a creative and stimulating range of opportunities for learning. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is effectively planned to extend children's own personal experiences in a practical and stimulating way. In Years 1 to 4, pupils identify lessons as being one of the things they like best about the school saying, 'There is always something interesting happening every term'. Nonetheless, there are too few opportunities for sustained writing or to be involved in problem solving activities in mathematics. Educational visits and foreign language teaching broaden the pupils' understanding of the world. A broad range of after school and lunchtime clubs and residential trips fosters self-confidence and teamwork helping to ensure a varied and meaningful curriculum. Pupils' learning and understanding of community issues are extended by visitors to the school such as local vicars, a Rabbi and the Mayor of Swale. Additionally, effective partnerships with organisations, such as Kent Wildlife, provide a wealth of enrichment through activities such as mammal surveys.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are very pleased in the way that the school looks after their children. One comment capturing the views of many was, 'Staff are extremely approachable and always willing to discuss any issues and concerns we have about our child'. All staff are firmly committed to the care and well-being of pupils. Child protection procedures

are strong, with staff being clear about what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. Risk assessments are well thought out for activities in and out of school to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils know that if they have worries or concerns they can go to a member of staff to talk things over. There are thorough procedures for checking the progress that pupils make. However, the information collected is not always used effectively to guide them to improve their work. Carefully targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is an important factor in the good progress they make. Pupils who enter during the school year are given good support to help them to adjust quickly to their new environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is a very good leader with an intuitive understanding of the needs of the school and a clear vision of how it might improve further. All who are involved in the running of the school share this vision, which results in a strong team ethos. The recently restructured senior management team provides the school with a clearer view of its overall provision and its impact on achievement and standards. However, the school is not complacent and is keen to introduce initiatives to extend its responsibilities; for instance, by involving the senior management team in playing a more active role in leading aspects of provision such as assessment and the curriculum. Leadership and management are effective in involving all stakeholders in having a say in the way the school develops. As a result, they are fully involved at all stages in the creation of the school improvement plan. Performance management is effective in bringing about change, being linked well to staff professional development and school improvement. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and also willing to ask searching questions about the decisions of senior management.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	2
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 so much for the warm way in which you welcomed us when we came to your school. We really enjoyed talking to some of you and finding out about all the things you do. We would like to tell you what we found your school does well and how it could improve further.

Eastchurch Church of England Primary is a good school and a very a friendly place in which to work and play. Although you do not quite reach the standards expected by the end of Year 4 you have improved so much from the time you started in the school as a result of the good progress you make. Behaviour is excellent and you look after others well, as we saw when Buddies and Aces helped younger pupils to play well together. Your school takes very good care of you and all adults are proud of you all and told us you are kind and considerate to others. Your parents are very pleased about the way the school looks after you. You told us how safe and secure you feel in school and how you can talk to a member of staff if you have any worries. You also told us your lessons are very interesting and teachers make learning fun.

A special word of thanks to the two pupils from the eco team who showed us how well the school is doing in helping people understand the importance of looking after our environment. You both are a credit to the exciting school community to which you belong.

There are three things we think your school needs to do now. These are:

- Improve your skills in writing and in solving problems in mathematics.
- Give you work that makes all of you think hard, especially those who sometimes find their activities too easy.
- Encourage some parents to make sure their children come to school more regularly.

Thank you for being so friendly and we hope you keep on enjoying the work you do.