

Northbourne Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118689
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379661
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jack Roberts
Headteacher	Catherine Karunaratna
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed nine lessons and four teachers and listened to pupils read. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 43 parents and carers were received and analysed along with those from staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Northbourne is smaller than the average-sized primary school and the number on roll has fallen since the previous inspection. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. Their needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication or behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage children in a Reception class. A Nursery on the school site is managed by a private provider and therefore not included in this inspection. The school exceeds the current floor standards in English and mathematics. The school has gained Healthy Schools Status and Advanced Status for Extended Schools.

There have been significant changes in the school since the previous inspection. After a period of considerable instability and turbulence, during which delegated powers were removed from the governing body, the school was federated with a local primary school in September 2011. The headteacher of the federated school was appointed as the executive headteacher of both schools at this time. Prior to this, from September 2010, she had been supporting Northbourne in her role as a Local Leader of Education. The federation shares a governing body, a special educational needs coordinator and a family liaison officer. In addition there is an assistant headteacher at Northbourne.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Significant improvements have been made since the federation. This is confirmed by parents and carers and summed up by one who wrote, 'I feel a lot has changed in this school for the better and the school has got back its community atmosphere which is friendly and approachable.'
- Achievement in English and mathematics, including for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is good. Pupils make best progress in reading and by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 attainment in reading is above average.
- A clear and well-planned focus on writing has resulted in improved attainment, especially in spelling, punctuation, vocabulary and presentation skills, which were points to improve reported at the last inspection. This has helped to increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in English since 2010. A small number of more able pupils are capable of doing even better, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Lessons are consistently well planned and teaching effectively meets the needs of learners through a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. Marking and feedback are generally good although some inconsistency remains. Consequently, pupils do not always have time to respond to teachers' comments or assess their own progress towards achieving individual targets for learning.
- The school provides a secure, safe environment for learning. Behaviour is good. Attendance is average and improving although there are still a number of pupils who miss out on learning in order to take family holidays.
- Within overall good leadership and management, the headteacher provides excellent leadership and is a significant driving force in the way the school has improved and continues to do so. A group of pupils agreed with one who said,

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‘Things are much, much better now.’

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 by building on the accelerated progress pupils are currently making throughout the school and ensuring that more able pupils have sufficient time to complete the challenges provided for them.
- Ensure all teaching and learning matches that of the best seen by:
 - providing pupils with consistent opportunities and time to respond to marking and feedback so they can improve their work
 - developing pupils’ skills in assessing their own progress towards their targets for learning.
- Build on the successful drive to improve attendance by continuing working with families to ensure that pupils do not miss out on important learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Published attainment data needs to be interpreted with caution as the small and fluctuating number of pupils can skew the picture of performance. Children start at school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are generally below expectations for their age and make good progress towards reaching their goals for learning by the end of the Reception year. They develop enthusiasm for books and stories and are very attentive listeners when sharing books with their Year 6 ‘buddies’. Their knowledge of phonics (sounds and letters) is good. The end of Year 6 attainment is broadly average overall. The school’s progress data and pupils’ current work show that learning is improving for all groups of pupils, including the above average number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Progress is good and pupils are catching up with previous gaps in their learning resulting from the unsettled period in the school.

The regular focus on writing means that in all lessons, pupils are enjoying writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences in different genres. For example, convincing, persuasive writing in a letter to the headteacher put forward well-structured arguments that coming to school on a Saturday would not be a good idea! Similarly others were able to draw on their history work to create imaginative settings for an Aztec myth and their research for the topic on the Earth, Sun and Moon. They competently use features such as similes, alliteration and ‘wow’ words to enhance their creative work, develop a good sense of the needs of different readers and draw on their good knowledge of the styles of a range of authors to influence their writing. Pupils know how to use a range of punctuation for effect. This was

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explained well by a Year 1 pupil who, when asked about his use of an exclamation mark said, 'Well you would be surprised if you were kidnapped by pirates.'

Attainment in reading is above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. By Year 2, competent, fluent readers are clearly reading to make sense as well as using phonic knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words, correcting themselves when the sense is lost. Less fluent readers show good knowledge of the sounds in words but have more difficulty in reading for meaning. By Year 6, pupils read confidently and with enjoyment. Although they are unfamiliar with the terminology of higher order reading skills, they demonstrate their use very well in their comprehension of the texts they are reading. Pupils make good use of their mathematical skills to support learning in other subjects.

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are making good progress and are positive about how well the school develops pupils' skills. The inspector agrees with these views but also with the comments from a few parents and carers that some more able pupils could be more effectively challenged in their learning, especially in their writing and mathematics.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers are unanimous in their view that their children are taught well and this is confirmed by inspection findings. Pupils are very positive about teaching. They describe their lessons as fun and interesting and older pupils comment on how teaching has improved and helps them learn well. Teaching assistants provide good support for the groups and individuals they work with. They are effective in ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others through well-targeted support and activities that meet their learning needs well. Teaching assistants, like teachers, are skilled in the correct articulation of sounds when teaching phonics.

Very good relationships exist between all staff and pupils, which encourage pupils to work hard and want to do their best. Teaching and the curriculum promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. As a result, pupils are encouraged to develop and use good personal skills to work collaboratively, creating a strong sense of community, tolerance and understanding of others' needs. They have opportunities to take responsibility and ownership of their learning by planning a topic of their choice during one term in the year. Teachers' good questioning skills promote learning well. Just occasionally, however, in the first part of lessons, teachers do not use a range of strategies to ensure that all pupils engage and respond to their questions. In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is a good balance of activities that are directed by adults and those where children make their own choices. Adults encourage children's growing independence effectively. The classroom provides a stimulating learning environment where children's early writing and number skills are promoted well with a good focus on reading and writing in the 'office' and role-play area of the dinosaur museum.

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Planning in all classes identifies tasks for different groups and includes extension activities. Still, all pupils often start at the same point and so some more able pupils do not always have the time to extend their learning. Marking and feedback are generally good and provide pupils with clear pointers for improving their work. They do not, however, always have time to reflect on teachers' comments or respond to them. Pupils know their targets for learning and what is required to reach the next level but they do not always have opportunities to develop their ability to assess their own progress towards achieving them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers all agree that the school keeps children safe and that behaviour in the school is good. These views agree with the inspection findings. Pupils, in their questionnaire, also said they feel safe in school. In discussions they explained that there is no bullying of any kind, including internet bullying, but they were confident that teachers would deal with any incidents should they occur. Pupils appreciate the benefits of a small school community, commenting that because everyone is known, 'we all get on well and we all look out for each other'. Teachers provide pupils with good role models and promote good attitudes to learning successfully. Pupils respond well to sanctions and rewards. There are effective strategies in place to support the learning of a very few pupils who have considerable behavioural needs and find it difficult to moderate their own behaviour appropriately. Consequently, there is very little disruption to the learning in lessons. Pupils' good behaviour makes a considerable contribution to good learning. Pupils know right from wrong and are tolerant of the fact that some pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Attendance is average as the school seeks to address the issue of the number of families that take holidays in term time. The school's initiatives are helping to improve attendance rates but recognise there is still work to be done.

Leadership and management

Within good leadership and management overall, the excellent and highly effective leadership of the headteacher has galvanised and motivated the leadership and management of the school as well as staff and pupils. The rigorous focus on teaching and learning and professional development since her initial involvement in the school has brought about improvements over time and better outcomes for pupils. The impact of the federation and the shared vision and direction by all leaders, including the governing body, is ensuring that these improvements are being sustained. Despite the considerable difficulties facing the school after the last inspection, there has been rapid improvement. Accurate and thorough self-assessment informs priorities for development and has moved the overall effectiveness of the school from satisfactory to good, demonstrating a good capacity for further improvement.

Across the federation, a well-planned curriculum enables staff and pupils from both schools to work together and share expertise and resources. A good example was the opportunity pupils had to join pupils at the federated school in a video conference with the British Museum. Such a memorable learning experience,

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promoted pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well and would not otherwise have been available to them. Pupils are proud and enthusiastic about their gardening skills and the school is planning the development of the school grounds to considerably increase learning opportunities for pupils.

Regular communication and the work of the family liaison officer are among the strategies to engage parents and carers into the life of the school, although a few parents and carers feel the school could give them further help to support their children's learning. One parent wrote, 'Previous lack of communication has improved greatly.' In response to their requests, parents and carers of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now given clear information about what their children are learning. The school's inclusive ethos and clear commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination are demonstrated in the support provided to ensure that pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are managed well and stay involved in their education. There is good support for pupils particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents and carers were especially positive in agreeing that their children are well looked after and their particular needs are met. One parent commented that her children's 'individual needs have been well acknowledged and nurtured'. All safeguarding requirements are well established and ensure that pupils feel safe and learn in a safe environment.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Northbourne Church of England Primary School, Deal, CT14
OLP**

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school and for talking to me about your work. You are very polite and friendly and I appreciated the way you helped me find out about your school. You are right to enjoy coming to Northbourne because I agree with you that it is a good school.

These are the main things I found.

- There have been many improvements since your school became part of a federation and you have lots more opportunities to do many exciting things that you could not do before.
- You work hard and make good progress. You do especially well in your reading and have done well to improve your writing skills.
- You behave well and feel safe because the adults in the school care for you.
- The teaching is good and you enjoy lots of interesting activities. You especially enjoy using the laptops to help you learn.
- Your headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors all work well together to help you achieve well.

These are the things that will make your school even better.

- Improve the levels you reach in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Teachers should make sure that those of you who find learning easier have enough time to complete the challenges they set for you.
- Make sure all lessons are as good as the best ones, help you learn as well as you can by giving you time to respond to teachers' marking and improve your work, and help you learn how to decide for yourself how well you are making progress towards your targets.
- Improve attendance so that no one misses out on important learning.

You can help by always trying hard and doing your best.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Coussins
Lead inspector

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