

# St Helen's Church of England Primary School, Cliffe

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	118641
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	379653
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Eileen Chadwick

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Bonner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vivienne Barr
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Church Street Cliffe Rochester ME3 7PU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 220246
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 222747
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	1–2 February 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	379653



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick

Additional inspector

George Long

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors spent nine hours observing teaching, which included visiting 20 lessons and observing seven teachers. The inspectors heard samples of pupils' reading in Years 1, 2 and 6 and held meetings with pupils. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the governing body and staff. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including policies, the school improvement plan, pupils' work, and records of their learning and progress. In addition, inspectors considered the responses to questionnaires from 42 parents and carers and responses from a sample of questionnaires submitted by pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

This primary school is slightly below average in size. It draws its pupils from the local community and surrounding rural area. Nearly all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentages of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are above average. The majority of these pupils have communication, literacy and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in a single-age Reception class.

A new senior leader has been appointed since the beginning of this academic year and a third of the teaching staff have also joined since then. There has been some staffing disruption in Year 3 due to the teacher's longer-term absence. The number on roll has increased since the previous inspection. The school provides a daily breakfast club for its pupils. The school meets the current floor standard.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. By Year 6, pupils' attainment is average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing.
- Children in Reception make a satisfactory start. They quickly settle and do well in reading and phonics (knowledge of letters and their sounds) but too few reach higher levels in mathematical development.
- Good progress in Key Stage 1 leads to pupils' above average attainment in Year 2, including in reading. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 2, although more rapid in Years 5 and 6 than in other years.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. However, in Key Stage 2, lower attaining pupils do not always have as good a grasp of phonics as they should and do not read regularly enough.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall; it is strongest in Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6. In Years 3 and 4, reading tasks are occasionally too hard for lower attaining pupils and mathematics activities are too easy for more able pupils. Assessment is not used consistently enough to build on pupils' prior learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are well cared for and are kept and feel very safe.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Issues from the previous inspection have been tackled adequately and monitoring is satisfactory. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is rising and attainment in Year 2 has improved well. However, the school improvement plan does not show enough attainment targets and governors do not evaluate the impact of initiatives on raising achievement as well as they should. Most parents and carers are pleased with the school and their children's progress.
- Schools whose overall effectiveness is satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement by December 2012 by:
  - rigorously monitoring pupils' performance to ensure attainment is more even between reading and mathematics
  - improving lower attaining pupils' reading by systematically building their phonics skills and ability to use these when reading
  - improving achievement for more able Reception children in problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils in all years make good or better progress by July 2012 by:
  - using assessment information and groupings more effectively in Years 3 and 4 to ensure lessons build upon all pupils' prior learning
  - making sure literacy tasks are not too hard for lower attaining pupils
  - ensuring there are opportunities for lower attaining pupils to read every day.
- Ensure that all those with leadership responsibilities focus rigorously on improving the academic outcomes for pupils by July 2012 by:
  - ensuring the school improvement plan clearly shows the attainment targets for pupils in different years
  - strengthening governors' ability to evaluate the impact of initiatives on raising achievement.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children's starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are in line with age-related expectations. Satisfactory progress leads to their broadly average attainment on entry to Year 1. Children make good progress in phonics and reading, which lifts their reading attainment. However, fewer reach higher levels in problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy than they should. Progress is good in Key Stage 1 and pupils' attainment on entry to Year 3 is rising.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 represents satisfactory but uneven progress. By Year 6, attainment is higher in reading than in mathematics at the higher levels. More rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 enables pupils to catch up from some earlier underachievement. Pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4 is now satisfactory, although more able pupils do not achieve as well in mathematics when work is too easy. There is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress that is similar to their peers. Lower attaining pupils in upper Key Stage 2 sometimes have gaps in their phonics skills due to weaker teaching in previous years. In Key Stage 2, intervention procedures are satisfactory, but are not rigorous enough in phonics to enable less able pupils to quickly build all the skills needed to read more complex words. Pupils' communication skills develop well, and by Year 6, many are confident

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speakers, including those with speech and language difficulties.

The quality of learning in lessons is variable but generally satisfactory. Pupils make accelerated progress in phonics, reading and writing in Year 2 because activities are enjoyable and successfully build on pupils' prior skills. However, progress sometimes slows in literacy when pupils' learning is not completely matched to their needs. In a Year 4 literacy lesson, all pupils enjoyed acting out a conversation from *The Green Ship* by Quentin Blake before writing a 'conversation'. However, whilst most groups quickly learned how to use more advanced punctuation in their writing, the task was hard for lower attaining pupils. In Year 3, reading tasks are sometimes too difficult for lower attaining pupils and this slows their progress in a range of subjects, for example when solving verbal problems in mathematics. Almost all parents and carers feel their children enjoy school and are making good progress. A few parents expressed concerns about the impact of staff changes on progress in Year 3. The inspection team found that pupils' progress is satisfactory and recognises that staffing issues have been resolved.

### **Quality of teaching**

There is some strong teaching but not enough to promote consistently good progress, as was seen both during the inspection and from evidence over time. Relationships in lessons are good and teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. The school's policies on rewards and sanctions are clear to pupils and used consistently. Throughout the school, practical activities and information and communication technology (ICT) are used well to help pupils learn. Pupils have challenging targets and teachers provide clear explanations, and work is marked so pupils know how to improve. The school has regular and accurate assessment information about the performance of pupils. In the best lessons, teachers use this information and their secure subject knowledge to plan well-matched and challenging activities, as seen, for example, in a guided reading session in Year 5, where the text motivated both boys and girls. However, prior learning is not always sufficiently taken into account when teachers plan work. In lessons where teaching is less effective, there is not always enough direct teaching of reading for lower attaining pupils or, occasionally, reading texts are too hard. Reading records show that some lower attaining pupils do not read often enough, either in school or at home. Teachers do not consistently ensure these pupils are heard to read on a daily basis in school.

Revisions to the mathematics curriculum have strengthened the teaching of basic skills and problem-solving. Teaching in mathematics is strong in Key Stage 1 and in Years 5 and 6, successfully matching pupils' work to the range of their abilities throughout the lessons. In satisfactory mathematics lessons, more able pupils are not always consistently challenged. In Reception, children are not given enough opportunities for practical mathematical investigations through purposeful play, and this limits their understanding.

The broad curriculum is used well to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, teachers used a visit to the science museum to encourage a sense of wonder in the scientific world and to underpin pupils' factual

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and fantasy writing about space. Most parents and carers expressed their satisfaction with the quality of teaching, although a few felt more able pupils could do better. The inspection team agrees with this view.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well and are supportive of each other. Friendships between pupils are strong and, from the start in Reception, they share resources and their learning. Adults model positive relationships and, consequently, pupils show respect and courtesy towards each other and towards adults. By Years 5 and 6, pupils set an extremely good example to the rest of the school in the way in which they move around the school and concentrate during lessons.

Pupils' well-established understanding of right from wrong is developed strongly through staff's consistent approach to behaviour management. It is clear from the attractive displays of pupils' work and the well-organised school environment that pupils look after their school very well. The inspection found that poor behaviour is rare, because pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are helped to adjust to school. Pupils develop good teamwork skills and can work independently, for example when solving practical mathematical problems in Year 6. A very large majority of parents and carers, as well as pupils, commented on the good behaviour of pupils typically seen every day in school, and school records confirm that this has been the case over time. Parents and carers told inspectors that this school has always been a happy and very safe place. However, occasionally when lesson introductions do not fully meet their needs, pupils' concentration wanes and they become fidgety. Pupils say they know how to keep themselves safe and understand the different sorts of bullying and how to prevent it. They say that bullying seldom occurs and that they trust adults to deal with any that might. Pupils are punctual and their attendance is average. The breakfast club provides a happy and caring start to the school day for some pupils, and this helps them to be ready for lessons.

### **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has gathered a team who share her commitment to improving achievement and the appointment of a new assistant headteacher, has strengthened leadership capacity. Staffing inconsistencies have been resolved and the focus is on helping teachers to improve achievement. The headteacher has introduced improved self-evaluation and monitoring systems, whilst recognising that monitoring of pupils' progress could still be more rigorous, especially for lower attaining pupils in literacy. All teachers are now involved in analysing pupils' attainment and progress. Middle leaders are being empowered to play their full part in raising achievement, for example by working alongside colleagues to share good practice as well as observing teaching. The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills across a range of subjects and it supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Systems for listening to pupils read vary in different classes and are not always robust enough for lower attaining pupils. Governors are supportive and understand the school's strengths and areas for development. However, they do

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not sufficiently monitor the impact of initiatives on improving achievement. The school improvement plan focuses on the right priorities but has a limited focus on what levels of attainment the school should be striving for.

There is a strong focus on keeping safe, and safeguarding arrangements securely meet statutory requirements. The school promotes equality satisfactorily and there is no evidence of discrimination. Achievement is steadily improving over time. Target setting is much improved and more able pupils are given better challenge in English. The school has clear capacity to improve.



## 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](http://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.**



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of St Helen's Church of England Primary School, Rochester ME3 7PU**

I would like to thank you for the very warm welcome that you gave to my colleague and I when we visited you recently. You were keen to show us your work and explain about your school. We enjoyed our time in your school. Your good behaviour, positive attitudes and helpfulness make an important contribution to the success of your school.

St Helen's is a satisfactory school. It is improving and the headteacher and staff are working hard to do their best for you and provide an interesting range of activities. You make satisfactory progress overall and, by Year 6, attain average but improving standards.

We have asked the headteacher, the governing body and the staff to:

- make sure that, in Reception, you do as well in number work as you do in reading and in learning sounds and letters
- ensure that by Year 6, you do as well in both reading and mathematics as you do in writing
- make all lessons as good as the best ones, so that the work is at just the right level and never too easy or hard for you
- ensure school leaders, teachers in charge of subjects and members of the governing body keep a closer check on how well you are doing.

We hope you will continue to enjoy school and carry on working hard in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick  
Lead inspector

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