

John Mayne Church of England Primary School, Biddenden

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118662
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358414
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Rickwood
Headteacher	Melanie Williams
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eleven lessons were observed taught by eight teachers. Inspectors visited all classrooms, observed behaviour at lunchtimes and playtimes and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and a group of pupils. Inspectors examined pupils' work and school documents, including improvement plans, safety records and assessment information. They analysed 62 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with those completed by 62 pupils and 12 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The pupils' attainment in their writing and mathematical work.
- The quality of the curriculum and teaching to see how it is promoting pupils' learning, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- The school's promotion of community cohesion.
- How the school uses self-evaluation routines to guide planning and priorities.

Information about the school

John Mayne Primary is a smaller than average sized school. The pupils are mainly White British, although there is a very small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The range of needs includes academic, behavioural and emotional difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one Reception class. The other classes contain mixed-age year groups, although Year 2 pupils are taught as a separate class in the mornings. The school runs a breakfast club each day. The school has a number of awards reflecting its promotion of healthy lifestyles, environmental awareness and sporting successes.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

John Mayne Primary is a good school. It provides a good quality of education. Since the last inspection, several areas of its work have improved. Pupils make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave. Pupils, parents and carers think that it is a good school, but also want it to be even better. One comment typified the general view of parents and carers: 'We are very happy with John Mayne. It has a wonderful family atmosphere which is always very welcoming.'

Children have a good start to school life as the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that they gain basic skills well. They enter Year 1 with abilities expected for their age, although their knowledge of letter sounds and writing lag slightly behind their good number and social skills. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress occasionally slows when they are not fully stretched in their learning. The school's focus to improve pupils' writing is paying off so pupils write well in a variety of styles. In mathematics, pupils develop secure levels of basic number understanding, although their investigative skills are not sufficiently promoted. Science work is often 'hands on' but some activities are not always based on exciting starting points to enliven pupils' learning further. In last year's national tests, pupils attainment was average, despite some having high levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Current work indicates that pupils are on track to reach average attainment by the time they leave, although pupils' writing and speaking skills are higher than expected nationally. In other subjects, such as information and communication technology (ICT), pupils achieve well and use their skills confidently in other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their classmates, often because teaching assistants are well briefed and guide pupils effectively.

Good teaching, aided by pupils' effective personal development, contributes to their good basic skills and achievement. They work collaboratively and have a clear understanding of right and wrong. In lessons and at lunchtimes, pupils' behaviour is good, if sometimes boisterous on occasions. Pupils' links with the local community are good and they enjoy being involved with village events such as 'Biddenden Blaze'. The school's recent sporting successes are a testament to the way the curriculum promotes pupils' healthy lifestyles alongside their academic and creative abilities. However, the school recognises that activities in mathematics and science do not capitalise sufficiently upon pupils' natural curiosity to investigate and that some activities are not always relevant enough to their interests.

The headteacher and staff work well as a team and use effective self-evaluation routines to diagnose weaknesses in teaching and dips in performance such as pupils' writing skills. Senior leaders also recognise, for example, that the pupils' awareness of others with different backgrounds or beliefs who live much further from the school is not sufficiently

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well developed. Governors' good level of support and challenge helps shape and check on the progress of the school's actions. The school's track record of improvement, with clear planning and actions to tackle weaknesses successfully means that the school has a good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' investigative and problem solving skills in mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6 in the next academic year by ensuring that:
 - more relevant 'real life' activities are planned within mathematics to help pupils apply and develop their problem-solving abilities
 - activities in science include more interesting starting points to entice pupils into planning and solving meaningful investigations
 - pupils, particularly those who are more able, are challenged fully in their scientific and mathematical understanding.
- Improve the school's promotion of community cohesion in the next academic year by:
 - conducting an audit of what the school currently provides to assess current levels of provision
 - developing more meaningful relationships with schools in the United Kingdom and in other countries.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a happy start to school and progress well from their starting points. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes contribute to their generally good achievement. This is also true for all groups of pupils. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, often because the school identifies their needs quickly and then ensures that they receive a variety of targeted support from small group to one-to-one activities. The few pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language achieve well because of the clear identification of their needs, which are then addressed well.

Pupils' basic skills in mathematics, and particularly English, are secure. In the Year 5/6 class, they enjoyed studying 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens. Pupils' writing skills and their speaking skills about the different view points of the characters developed well and the topical theme of the play helped add to the Christmas spirit to come. Pupils' basic number skills develop systematically, although sometimes activities are not always planned with a 'real world flavour' so pupils do not use their skills often enough to solve practical problems. The 'hands on' science work, such as devising and costing electrical circuits to help Father Christmas make lights for toys in Year 2, was fun and challenging. This approach is not the norm, however, and other science activities are too predictable in approach so pupils' learning and progress is slower. Pupils achieve well in other subjects such as computer studies, musical and sporting activities. Pupils' good achievement, combined with some activities such as simple responsibilities, helps pupils prepare well for their next school and later life.

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Pupils value the family atmosphere evident in the school. Most comment that they feel safe and enjoy school as their good spiritual, social and moral development helps them to make good choices. Pupils' understanding of their own culture is good, but their understanding of others with different cultural backgrounds or beliefs is not sufficiently well developed. Around school and in lessons, pupils relate easily to classmates and to visitors. At morning playtimes, behaviour can dip for some, partly because there is less to do when compared to lunchtimes. Pupils say this behaviour is relatively infrequent, but recognise that it needs to be eliminated before behaviour can be said to be excellent. Pupils have a good range of other responsibilities, from register and fruit collection to pet feeding. Pupils enjoy the pre-school breakfast club as it provides a welcome start to the school day for those who attend, contributing to the school's above average attendance.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make increasingly good use of a curriculum which is broad and promotes increased learning and, in the case of writing, rising attainment. The planning of work into topics and themes provides variety in learning, although this is comparatively new and not fully developed to best effect for all topics. Pupils use their writing skills in science and topic work regularly. Planning for some aspects in mathematics and science lacks the extra creativity or sparkle. That said, teachers do involve pupils in their learning and group work is a regular feature of lessons. Introductions are usually short, to the point and help

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pupils know what they are trying to learn. Teachers question pupils well for the most part, but in some activities, more able pupils' learning is not always stretched by more probing questions or problems to solve. Teachers use audiovisual whiteboards to enliven learning where possible or to show pictures, such as when pupils in a Year 4 class looked at an imaginary accident to decide the best words to describe what happened and when. Teachers' marking is regular, positive in tone and helpful in guiding pupils. Teaching assistants play a valuable part in supporting pupils learning English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Pupils appreciate the increased supervision at lunchtimes. Most parents or carers are supportive of the school's efforts. As one typically said, 'My child is well settled and is far happier than she was at her last school and this speak volumes for John Mayne.' Conversely, a very small number of parents and carers think that some pupils' behaviour or rough play causes difficulties at times.. E-safety principles are important aspects which the school promotes well and pupils are clear about the possible dangers of computer use. Links with other schools, both on entry to the Reception class and to local secondary schools, aid a smooth transition to and from the school. Outside professionals support the school to good effect so that those pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable make good progress in their academic and emotional development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and members of the governing body provide clear direction to the school. Their ambitious priorities for development, such as improving the practical side of mathematics teaching further and possible improvements to the school's buildings, are all based upon a good assessment of needs. Monitoring of teaching is regular and joint staff 'study lessons' are starting to help staff to modify their teaching skills where needed. The headteacher and the Chair of Governing Body work well together, and other governors, some of whom are new, hold the school to account well. Staff are mindful of the need to ensure that the school promotes equal opportunities and avoids discrimination. Their careful analysis of the progress pupils make means there is currently little difference in attainment due to gender or other factors. Parents and carers approve of the school's family ethos and links with them are good as they are involved in initiatives such as the 'parents' representative forum' to raise their awareness of how their children are being taught, or to raise concerns. Senior leaders are thorough in their approach to safeguarding pupils. They ensure that vetting procedures for staff are robust and that health and safety visits are regular and effective. Governors, along with staff, promote community cohesion satisfactorily as pupils are involved well within the school and the local community.

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However, they recognise that pupils do not have a wide enough perspective of the variety of communities represented in the United Kingdom and beyond.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start to school as their welfare and well-being are promoted well. Adults ensure that children have a good variety of experiences, and skilful help with early reading skills prepares them well for their next classes. Teaching is good in giving children a variety of activities, which promote their early skills in communication, language, problem solving and numeracy. Children develop early number skills well, such as when counting the number of skittles they knock down, and they enjoy role play activities such as the class travel agents who enjoyed booking an imaginary cruise for the inspector. Activities planned for the outside area are generally well conceived, and although climbing equipment is comparatively new, other resources look a little well worn. Teachers and other adults supervise pupils well, although on occasions, pupils spend too long on the same activities and are not enticed to do other activities to widen their play experience or to extend their learning. From their typically below average starting points, most children are on track to reach the expected levels, and some outcomes, such as their disposition, attitudes, communication and thinking skills, are good. Other areas such as their knowledge of letter sounds develop more slowly. Leaders have a good understanding of this age group and the good 'hands on' approach means the school has clearly focused upon diagnosing weaker areas of provision. The reorganisation of the outside space, prompted by a change in classrooms to aid supervision, has improved provision and has ensured that the children have an enjoyable start and smooth transition into Year 1.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a good return of questionnaires to inspectors. Common positive comments included parents' and carers' appreciation of the family atmosphere fostered, the care shown by staff and the general approachability shown by the school. A small minority of parents and carers were concerned, however, that some aspects of pupils' behaviour could be improved, as this was occasionally disruptive to others' learning. Inspectors spent more time following up these concerns and found that pupils' behaviour, while not perfect, was good for the majority of the time. The school has improved supervision at lunchtime and the rewards and sanction routines have also been reviewed recently to make expectations clearer to everybody.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Mayne CE Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	52	26	42	2	3	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	37	60	22	35	3	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	21	45	73	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	37	29	47	7	11	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	26	42	32	52	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	40	35	56	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	44	31	50	3	5	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	22	35	25	40	8	13	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	34	32	52	5	8	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	23	32	52	8	13	6	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	35	34	55	6	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	53	22	35	7	11	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	56	18	29	9	15	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



13 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Mayne Church of England Primary School, Ashford TN27 8AL

Many thanks for your welcome recently when we visited your school. We think yours is a good school and we are confident that you enjoy the range of things you can do which help your learning. Here are some particular things we found out.

- You make good progress in your learning, and your attainment in many subjects, especially in writing and mathematics, is around the expected levels.
- Your computer, musical and sporting skills develop well.
- Behaviour is generally good and you told us you enjoy lessons.
- The school makes good links with the village and other organisations to help you learn. I would like to see 'Biddenden Blaze' next year!
- The school cares for you well, particularly those who find learning hard or who are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- You know about keeping healthy and keeping fit with exercise; just make sure you don't bump into others at playtimes!
- Those I spoke to and your questionnaires said you feel safe in school.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are glad the school is now good, but want it to be even better.

We have asked the school to try and improve in a couple of areas to help it to get even better.

- Give those of you in Years 1 to 6 more 'real life' activities in mathematics that will really make you think hard and science problems that will really make you think deeply about how to solve them.
- Help you to learn more about others from different places and cultures through your links with schools and children in other parts of this country and abroad.

You can help too by continuing to be well behaved and in giving your ideas about how the school can keep improving.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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