

Four Elms Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118275
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358296
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dympna Arronow
Headteacher	Wendy Fox
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 11 lessons with five teachers being seen. Meetings were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 58 questionnaires from parents and carers, six from staff and 57 from pupils in Years 3 to 6.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics across the school.
- The effectiveness of teaching at meeting differing needs in mixed-age classes, particularly for the more able.
- Pupils' attendance, responsibility-taking and their knowledge of how to improve their work.
- The impact of staff changes on pupils' learning.

Information about the school

This smaller than average-sized primary school takes some pupils from the local village but the majority come from the nearby town of Edenbridge. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these pupils have speech and language, and specific learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class, alongside some Year 1 pupils.

The school has a number of awards, including Healthy School accreditation and Eco-School status and holds the bronze award for modern foreign languages.

There have been significant changes in staff since the last inspection with almost all teachers newly arrived since then.

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

This is a good school where pupils flourish socially. There has been a concerted effort since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and this has been highly effective. Staff changes have been managed extremely well and have had a positive effect on pupils' learning, with teaching now consistently good across the school. Consequently, pupils' achievement is good, and attainment, which has been rising across the school, is now above average by the end of Year 6.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage where they are taught well. Pupils then make good progress in English and mathematics in the rest of the school because there is good challenge for all, including the more able. The linking of subjects together has helped to make writing purposeful and this has helped to improve progress. In science, where progress is satisfactory, some topics are not studied in sufficient detail. In addition, teachers do not always expect enough of the pupils in their written science work.

Pupils are very good ambassadors for the school. They learn values such as politeness and good manners, and contribute well to the community. Pupils keenly take responsibility and are given a good voice in school life through the school council and class forums. Pupils are well cared for and this helps them to feel very safe. They thoroughly enjoy school, and this is reflected in improving rates of attendance which are now broadly average. The school has successfully ensured that the vast majority of parents and carers now understand the negative effect on the learning of their children if they miss school without good reason.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Pupils raise funds for a school in South Africa, visit different places of worship and take a good part in local events such as art competitions in the museum. However, pupils have only a limited knowledge of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom and beyond, and not all appreciate the value of learning about this.

The school is successful and has improved so much because the headteacher has created an ethos in which pupils and staff feel valued and respected. There is a good understanding of the school's priorities for development based on good systems for checking effectiveness. The school has successfully demonstrated that it has a good capacity to improve further in the way that leaders have improved provision since the last inspection. There has been a good pace to change, and both teaching and pupils' progress and attainment are much improved.

The school engages extremely well with parents and carers. Projects such as a 'Dad's week' ensure that parents are fully involved in the life of the school and helps them to make a very positive contribution to their children's learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in science by ensuring that topics are covered in sufficient detail and that teachers always expect enough of the pupils in their written science work. (by July 2011)
- Strengthen the school's contribution to community cohesion by giving pupils more opportunities to learn about and appreciate the cultural diversity of modern British society. (by July 2011)

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Although there is some variation from year to year, few children are working at the levels expected for their age when they start school in the Reception Year. From these relatively low starting points, pupils' achievement is good, ensuring that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school and their good behaviour contribute well to the good progress and attainment that is seen in most lessons. In a good numeracy lesson, pupils made good progress as they explored the differences between decimal numbers. They showed great interest and were keen to do well because work was interesting and was made purposeful through the effective use of computers. In a good literacy lesson, pupils keenly explored ideas for themselves, building on their knowledge of Greek myths to describe a character. They extended their literacy skills well because work was practical and engaging, and was successfully linked to a history topic. When progress slows, pupils are less well engaged in their learning and their concentration then slips. For example, when pupils were working on addition skills, some became fidgety because the teacher talked for too long at the start of the lesson.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn quickly in most lessons. They are keen to learn and work hard, and they make good progress in improving basic skills. Those pupils identified as more-able learners also make good progress in English and mathematics because of the challenging work they are given.

Pupils become responsible young citizens. They are sociable and articulate, and work hard, although they do not always present their work neatly enough, especially in science. Pupils are kind and caring, but they have only a limited knowledge of cultures other than their own. Pupils keenly adopt healthy lifestyles and this is reflected in the school's Healthy School accreditation. Pupils take part in a good number of sports and sometimes grow and cook their own food.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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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	2
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	3
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?

Pupils are well cared for and supported, with adults devoting much time to ensuring that school is a happy and safe place to be. As one parent commented, 'Members of staff are always willing to go the extra mile for the children.' Pupils in need of additional support are quickly given it, although this is not always reflected thoroughly enough in paperwork that records actions and their impact.

Teachers make learning interesting by linking subjects together and they use resources imaginatively to bring subjects alive. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, especially when supporting those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, teachers manage this well. This is because there are good systems for assessing pupils' learning in English and mathematics and this information is used to plan what to teach next. However, in science, teachers' expectations are not always high enough and pupils sometimes complete the same piece of written work whatever their ability. Marking and target-setting is thorough and this means that pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning, especially in English where marking is particularly good.

The curriculum is strongly focused on developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology. This has contributed immensely to the rise in attainment since the last inspection. However, less time is allowed for other subjects than in most schools and in science, in particular, topics are not studied in sufficient detail.

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The school provides a good range of clubs and visits, which enrich learning and contribute well to pupils' personal development. A recent focus on teaching pupils both in and out of class about the importance of looking after the planet is reflected in the school's Eco-School status. Good partnerships with other schools and groups support pupils' learning effectively. For example, higher-attaining mathematicians benefit from opportunities to attend workshops at a nearby grammar school.

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?

Senior leaders and the governing body are strongly committed to school improvement and there is no complacency. Their good drive for improvement and their ambitions for what sort of school they want in the future are fully shared by all staff. There is a good understanding of remaining priorities because provision is monitored carefully and action to improve weaknesses is taken quickly. For example, the school has already made a start to strengthening its contribution to community cohesion following a recent audit of provision. There is a detailed action plan and excellent engagement with parents and carers. Additional activities such as a visit to a Gurdwara and a Global Week have already been provided. However, the impact, thus far, on pupils' knowledge of life beyond Four Elms has been relatively limited.

Members of staff are given good training opportunities and good support, and this means that teaching continues to improve. Many subject leaders are new to their roles and they have not had time to have a significant impact. Nevertheless, they are enthusiastic and already have a clear picture of what they would like to improve. The governing body provides good challenge to the school and takes a good part in strategic planning.

The school promotes equality successfully. Leaders carefully check data to ensure that no group is doing less well than others. There is no discrimination because pupils respect each other.

The school has good safeguarding procedures. Adults give safety a high priority and do all they can to minimise risks presented by the need to cross a road to get to the church hall where pupils have lunch.

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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	1
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 good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are taught well and there is an exciting and interesting curriculum. This means that children's attainment rises to broadly average levels by the end of the Reception Year. Children settle quickly when they start school, developing good confidence and playing together happily. They sensibly self-select where they are going to work and what they are going to do. Adults support this well by planning interesting activities both indoors and outdoors. For example, children show great concentration when they are learning about the properties of water by painting with it, making bubbles and pouring it into different sorts of containers. Although there are some older children in the class, differing needs are met well. Children are successfully encouraged to explore their own ideas, but adults occasionally miss opportunities to move learning on quickly when they are working independently.

Good leadership means that attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been rising. Action planning accurately identifies where improvement is needed and is based on thorough self-evaluation. Work on improving the outdoor area has been effective in improving provision, although some resources, both indoors and outdoors, are old and tatty.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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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 high return of questionnaires. Almost all parents and carers are very pleased with all aspects of school's work. Positive comments which successfully capture the key strengths of the school included, 'Our children are well cared for, supported and challenged', 'My child loves school' and 'It seems as though it is like a big family.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Four Elms 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 109 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	74	15	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	57	25	43	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	28	48	28	48	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	47	30	52	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	53	26	45	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	48	28	48	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	60	21	36	2	3	0	0
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)	28	48	22	38	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	48	30	52	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	43	32	55	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	47	31	53	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	48	29	50	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	35	60	22	38	0	0	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 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Four Elms Primary School, Edenbridge TN8 6NE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us about your work. You were very polite and friendly. We agree with you that your school is good and that you learn new things quickly.

These are some of the things we found out about your school.

- Children in the Reception class have settled very quickly and are already making good progress.
- You are taught well in Years 1 to 6 and this helps you to make good progress and achieve well.
- You enjoy school and try your best. There are lots of fun things to do outside lessons and it is great that you are learning about looking after the planet.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Well done to the school council for your recent work on making school an even safer place to be.
- All of the adults in the school look after you well. They give you good help when you are struggling with your work.
- The school is well led and managed, and all of the adults are working very hard to make the school even better.

This is what we have asked your school to do next.

- Make sure that more time is allowed for science lessons and that teachers always expect enough of you when you are writing in science.
- Give you more opportunities to learn about cultures other than your own.

We wish you all well for the future. All of you can help your teachers by continuing to work hard all of the time and trying to make sure you always present your work neatly.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector

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