

# Smarden Primary School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118380
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	358330
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	90
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stephanie Atkins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lee Selby
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2010
<b>School address</b>	Pluckley Road Ashford TN27 8ND
<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 770316
<b>Fax number</b>	01233 770316
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@smarden.kent.sch.uk

---

---

<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	358330

---

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited eight lessons involving five teachers, and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work, attended assemblies, and looked at planning documents, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 49 parents and carers, 12 staff and 44 pupils.

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

- How much progress do pupils make in their learning, particularly in writing?
- How well do pupils enjoy their learning and understand the quality of their work and how to improve it?
- What is the impact of the school's raising attainment plan and interim leadership arrangements on promoting pupils' achievement?

## Information about the school

Smarden School is much smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, and a range of other ethnic backgrounds are represented in small numbers. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught as one age group in the Reception class. Other pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. A private pre-school group operates in a building on the school site and is subject to a separate inspection.

In recent years the school has been working informally with three other schools locally to share staff development and provide some joint events for pupils. The previous headteacher left the school at the end of the summer term and an acting headteacher, who is currently the headteacher of one of the other schools, is leading the school until the end of the year. The governing body has just formalised an agreement to federate with one of the four local schools and an executive headteacher has been appointed to lead the federation from January 2011. Since the last inspection the school has achieved Healthy School and Kent Primary Languages awards.

**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?****3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

## Main findings

Smarden Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils, who get on well together and are happy at school. The school's strengths lie in the promotion of pupils' personal development. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise, shown in the recent Healthy School award. They are involved well in village life, for example contributing to events organised by local churches. During the inspection, pupils collected produce for their harvest thanksgiving service and distribution to elderly residents in the village. In school, pupils take on a variety of responsibilities such as organising music for assemblies, and older pupils help younger children at lunchtime, making a good contribution to the school's family atmosphere. Attendance is above average, developing good attitudes and a worthwhile model for their future economic well-being.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Following a sharp decline in Year 6 test results after the last inspection when pupils did not make enough progress through Key Stage 2, they have risen gradually. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is broadly average and performance at the higher Level 5 improved significantly last year, giving pupils a sound basis for secondary education. Although pupils now make satisfactory progress overall, it is uneven from year to year, leaving much to be achieved in booster lessons in their last year. Many pupils lack fluency in their handwriting, which slows them down when trying to record their thinking across the curriculum. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not always make as much progress as their classmates because the range of strategies used to accelerate their learning is sometimes too narrow. Teachers make learning interesting but there are inconsistencies in the level of challenge, the use of time and the quantity and quality of written feedback. Around the school, display lacks the vibrancy to stimulate pupils' curiosity and celebrate their achievements. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and staff recognise that current whole-school frameworks are not sufficiently detailed to help teachers in their daily planning.

The governing body and acting headteacher have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The recently appointed executive headteacher is already working with the school through existing partnership activity, and this is providing continuity through the current interim leadership arrangements. Staff have been updating their practice with the support of local authority consultants, and this is starting to take effect. Under the skilled guidance of the acting headteacher, the school has a satisfactory capacity for continuing improvement.

**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

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better as soon as possible to enable pupils to make consistent progress and raise their attainment in English and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that tasks are always matched closely to pupils' earlier attainment and learning
  - increasing the pace of lessons and expecting pupils to do more in the time given
  - improving pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their work
  - improving display in classrooms so that it celebrates pupils' achievement and directly supports current learning
  - giving pupils more written feedback about how to improve their work.
- Increase the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
  - refining the identification of their needs and using a broader range of strategies to support their learning.
- Ensure that all subject plans identify the knowledge and skills to be developed for each year group.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Pupils say that they find learning interesting and thoroughly enjoy the additional opportunities offered by the school, such as football, the art club and the residential visits for Key Stage 2 pupils. Pupils want to do well, although they do not always present their work well because they do not have clear guidelines. In lessons, they respond particularly well when their tasks are varied and the expectations made absolutely clear; for example, in a lesson when pupils were given a short time to use descriptive words they wrote interesting and relevant poems about the sounds of autumn because they had been given good stimulus for the task by taking a walk through the wooded area of the grounds. When pupils are not given enough guidance about what is expected of them or a specific time for their task, they lose concentration and sometimes chatter so that they do not achieve enough in the time. Pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science. Because pupils are not required to write at sufficient length regularly, their writing skills are lower than those in reading and numeracy. Pupils know their targets and what they need to improve but are less clear about exactly what they have to do to achieve this because marking does not give them detailed guidance about improvement.

Pupils are supportive of one another, and all age groups get on well together. Considerate behaviour enables pupils to feel safe and they are usually able to sort out minor problems for themselves without the need to involve an adult. The school council makes an important contribution to school life, for example in organising bottles for pupils to have ready access to water or in joining in the appointment process for new staff. Pupils practise healthy lifestyles, appreciate the food from the school kitchen and grow vegetables in the school garden. They develop their understanding of other cultures in a

**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

number of subjects, such as in French, and the school's work has been recognised in a Kent Primary Languages Gold Award.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 useful links across subjects to engage pupils and make learning relevant. When teachers set work which is challenging, pupils concentrate well and see the result of their efforts; for example, there was a buzz of achievement when pupils were required to apply their knowledge of counting in fives and tens to develop their understanding of division. Teachers use modern technology well to present information visually. Behaviour management is effective and results in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. However, there are some generic weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum. Teaching is too often satisfactory rather than good because learning lacks a sense of urgency and time is not used well, with activities going on too long so that pupils become restless or not enough time is given to summarising and consolidating learning. Topic themes are carefully considered to avoid repetition for pupils in mixed-age classes. Whole-school curriculum planning has not been updated recently to show current expectations of the subject knowledge and skills to be developed for each age range. Regular assessment enables teachers to monitor pupils' progress but they do not always use the information accurately to make sure that the work pupils are given consistently builds on previous learning. As a result, pupils who find learning easier are sometimes insufficiently challenged while the

**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

work is too hard for others, and generally the younger age range in the class make less progress than the older year group. The best teaching makes effective use of questioning, often within group work, to probe and consolidate learning. Teaching assistants make an important contribution by implementing specific intervention programmes to enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to improve their basic literacy skills and guiding the work of groups within lessons. However, these interventions are not always well timed and so sometimes pupils miss important aspects of learning within the classroom. Consequently, the interventions have only limited success in closing the gap between the performance of these pupils and that of their peers.

Pupils are well known as individuals and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable are given good support, particularly for their social and emotional development. Programmes to promote pupils' academic achievement are not evaluated sufficiently to see which make the greatest impact. Links within the group of schools are used well to provide additional activities, such as giving all Key Stage 2 pupils the opportunity for a residential experience. Such events effectively promote pupils' personal development and broaden their experience by working with pupils from other schools. Specialist teaching in French and in Mandarin last year, together with learning in religious education, helps pupils to understand other cultures and faiths.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The governing body is well led, meets statutory requirements and provides robust challenge to hold the school to account. Governors have taken prompt action to secure strong interim and ongoing leadership and the future viability of the school, having carefully researched the benefits of federating with another school before setting up a formal link. The acting headteacher has established a good understanding of the school's needs within a short time and is supporting staff well in identifying and sharing the most effective practice. Partnership work within the group of four schools makes a good contribution, for example in developing provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage, which has improved quickly. The creation of a formal federation is designed to support the school in developing subject leadership.

The school promotes cohesion locally well, for example by involving pupils in working with the Friends' Association to raise additional funds by collecting apples for juice. Arrangements to extend pupils' awareness of diversity nationally and internationally are satisfactory. Incidents of racial harassment are rare, reflecting the success of promoting social inclusion. The school has an analysis of the performance of different groups but this

**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

is not used well enough to ensure that action taken is closely targeted to reduce differences in progress rates, for example of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the younger age group in each class. As a result, the school's promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory rather than good. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are satisfactory and improving. Prompt action was taken during the inspection to replace the broken boundary fence, to remove the hazard of brambles and nettles, and reduce the risk of pupils falling into the ditch at the rear of the playing field.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes in the Reception class have improved since the last inspection because of good teaching and leadership by the staff in this class. Children enter the school with attainment which is broadly typical for their age. They make good progress and the school's assessments last year show that outcomes were above average by the end of Reception. Children in the current class have settled quickly into the school's routines, for example putting on their own coats to go outside. They are well cared for and are making good progress. Teachers provide a good learning environment, with lots of opportunities for children to explore and learn both indoors and outside. The outdoor area has been improved well, with the large playground mapped out well to suit a range of play and learning. Staff have appropriate plans to develop it further and to develop the indoor environment to improve the role-play areas and so stimulate children's imaginative play. Teachers use an effective balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities, giving children opportunities to explore the world around them through play and a range of imaginative activities. Children are given good encouragement to articulate their knowledge and understanding, and their language and communication skills are above the expectations for their age; this was evident, for example, when children talked fluently about how they had made a 'treasure map' or when they discussed foods as they sorted



**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

them into categories showing the relative healthy benefits. Children are prepared well for their activities so that they know what they are doing and sustain concentration for a long time. Staff make good use of assessments and share information well with parents and carers, linking learning in school and home well.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

While most parents and carers are happy with the opportunities offered by the school and a few wrote positive comments, a small minority express concerns about the progress their children make and how the school manages behaviour. Inspection evidence found that behaviour is managed well and is good around the school so that pupils are safe and happy. In some lessons when pupils are not sufficiently challenged, they lose concentration and behaviour is no better than satisfactory because pupils chatter and time is wasted. The report details above that while satisfactory overall, progress is uneven and that pupils do not make consistent progress through the school. A few parents or carers expressed concern that they have not been kept informed during a time of changing leadership. The governing body has informed parents as soon as it was possible of the interim arrangements and held a meeting to share plans for the future direction of the school.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Smarden 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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 92 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	49	23	47	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	23	47	21	43	2	4	3	6
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	31	29	59	5	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	35	22	45	8	16	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	41	18	37	7	14	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	31	26	53	7	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	53	20	41	2	4	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)	8	16	32	65	5	10	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	35	23	47	6	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	22	25	51	4	8	6	12
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	14	34	69	6	12	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	6	12	29	59	5	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	35	25	51	3	6	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



18 October 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Smarden Primary School, Smarden TN27 8ND**

Thank you for your help and welcome when we inspected your school recently. I found the conversation with the school council and those I had lunch with really helpful in understanding your views about the school. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

It is good that you are happy and feel safe in school, and that you get on well together. Your school is giving you a satisfactory education so that your attainment is broadly average. You take on responsibilities well, such as school councillors or helping one another at lunchtime. You are sensible pupils and generally work hard in lessons, though sometimes you chatter when you do not find the work really interesting. You know a lot about how to lead healthy lifestyles.

Our job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better. We have asked the staff to help you to make faster progress, particularly in English and mathematics by:

- making sure that your tasks are just at the right level, not too hard or too easy
- expecting you to do more for yourselves in each lesson so that no time is lost
- helping you to improve your handwriting and the presentation of your work
- making sure that the display around the school helps you in your work
- giving you more advice when they mark your work so that you know exactly what you have to do to achieve your targets
- changing some of the programmes for those of you who find learning difficult.

You can help by making sure that you ask if there is anything you do not understand and always do your best. Please thank your parents or carers for returning the questionnaires. It was very helpful for us to know their views.

We wish you every success for the rest of this year.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**