

Aldington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118365
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358328
Inspection dates	5–6 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Fotheringham
Headteacher	Sandra MacCourt
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 10 lessons and seven teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, pupils, members of the governing body, the family liaison officer and the school improvement adviser. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, monitoring records, the school improvement plan, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires received from 58 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- The achievement of higher attainers to determine whether teaching is challenging enough.
- The impact of the curriculum in raising standards and promoting good progress.
- How effectively the school monitors its work to raise standards in literacy and mathematics and promote consistently good or better teaching.

Information about the school

Aldington is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above that found nationally. Their needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication, and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. There is a nursery and breakfast and after-school provision on the school site. These are managed by a private provider and were not included in this inspection. The school has Healthy Schools accreditation and has gained Eco-Schools, Activemark, Artsmark and International School awards. At the time of the inspection, there was an acting deputy headteacher and two of the five classes had teachers on temporary or supply contracts to cover maternity leave and absence.

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

Pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors are rightly very proud of their good school. Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown in above average attendance, good attitudes to learning and their excellent contribution to the school and wider community. Pupils appreciate the benefits of being part of a small school community. One pupil said: 'We know everyone, we're all very friendly and we look out for each other.' Pupils have an outstanding awareness of how to stay fit and healthy, as recognised by the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. There is a high take-up and enjoyment of a wide range of physical activities, including a good range of sports and a commitment by many to walking or cycling to school. Outstanding partnerships with local schools, organisations and the local authority are well established, enrich the curriculum and contribute significantly to pupils' well-being and learning opportunities.

Teaching is good. Pupils are interested in their work and want to do well. Teachers' planning includes clear learning intentions and success criteria, which are shared with pupils so that they know the purpose of their lessons and their targets for learning. Skilled questioning extends pupils' thinking and helps them explain their learning. The good curriculum provides a variety of interesting activities and the school has worked hard to link learning across different subjects in a meaningful and memorable way, although this is not yet fully embedded across the school. On occasion, activities do not meet pupils' needs as well as they meet their interests and this can sometimes slow the progress of some pupils. Leaders and managers are correctly monitoring the impact of the curriculum to ensure that there is a systematic progression in skills.

Caution needs to be taken when interpreting published data because of the small and fluctuating numbers in the Year 6 cohorts, which can skew the patterns of attainment. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is above average and they achieve well. Clear and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school enable senior leaders and the governing body to focus on the most important aspects for development and take effective action to bring about improvements. For example, the school's analysis of its performance in the 2010 national tests correctly identified that, while the proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 was higher than found nationally, some pupils were not always making the progress of which they were capable and achieving the higher Level 5. The successful actions taken by leaders and managers have had a considerable impact on accelerating progress. Pupils' work and the school's rigorous tracking data show that, as a result, progress for all groups is good. These successes demonstrate the school's good capacity to make further improvements. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to others because their needs are identified at an early stage and effective, well-planned support is provided in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain and consolidate the good progress made by all groups by
 - providing pupils with consistent opportunities to link learning across different subjects in a creative, memorable and meaningful way, while ensuring a systematic progression in skills and knowledge.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children start school with levels of attainment that are as expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve well. Pupils' clear enjoyment, along with their positive attitudes and good behaviour, make an important contribution to their good achievement. For example, in a Years 4 and 5 science lesson, pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning about forces and planning fair tests. They happily supported each other in tackling challenging tasks and consequently made good progress in their scientific knowledge and investigative skills, which was a point for improvement in the previous inspection. Drama and role-play activities support pupils' learning well, particularly in writing. For example, when composing a letter written by a character in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, a group agreed with one pupil who said that the role play 'helped us get inside the character's head and understand how they felt'. Writing was skilled, imaginative and empathetic as a result. Excellent use is made of the spacious and well-planned school grounds to support pupils' learning, as seen in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Snowy, the class puppet, was only allowed to go on the equipment in the trim trail that was less than 100cm high or long. This investigation gave pupils a meaningful purpose for developing accuracy in their measuring skills. Pupils stay very focused and try hard, even when work is challenging. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make similar good progress to others in the school.

Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given and take them seriously, for example as school council members, peer mediators and playground friends. Older pupils provide good role models for younger children. Year 6 pupils act as 'buddies' to the Reception children and, as one Year 6 pupil said, 'It's really good to be a buddy because we learn about looking after people and showing them how to behave and enjoy themselves, and they know they have someone to talk to.' Pupils take part in many fund-raising events for a range of charities and causes, which helps them to develop an understanding of people who are in need. The work the school has done to gain the Eco-Schools award means that pupils understand and champion issues that affect society as a whole, such as recycling and sustainability. There is some impressive art work displayed around the school as a result of the work the school has done to gain the Artsmark award. Activities promote pupils' awareness of rights and responsibilities and of society. Pupils value the weekly celebration of their achievements for their academic and personal successes, which make a significant contribution to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils know how to stay safe and are confident to talk to adults should any problems arise. The good progress made in developing basic skills, and their good personal qualities, prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education and later life.

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

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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

Themed and creative approaches to the curriculum are used well to stimulate pupils' interests and learning, as seen in the 'Opera' work combining the creative and performing arts. As a result, pupils make good progress and learning is generally challenging and memorable for them. However, on a few occasions, planning does not systematically build on pupils' existing skills and subject knowledge. Where teachers encourage pupils to be resourceful and independent learners, a good pace to learning is evident in lessons. The curriculum is enriched particularly well by a wide range of clubs, which are well attended, and by visitors and visits, all of which effectively broaden pupils' experience and interests as well as promoting good personal skills.

In addition to the work of senior leaders and managers, the work of the family liaison officer makes a considerable contribution to the good care, guidance and support provided by the school for pupils and their families, particularly for those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. There are good links with other agencies and well-targeted support ensures that pupils integrate well and make good progress relative to their starting points. Transition procedures into school, through the classes and into Year 7, are effective and ensure good levels of support for pupils and their families. One parent commented; 'My child's teacher has been very supportive in preparing her well for her secondary school.'

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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?

Leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, share a drive, vision and good ambition to improve and provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils. The inclusive ethos of the school and its clear, detailed policies ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and develop without fear of discrimination. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored closely through formal observations and through regular reviews of pupils' work. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are rigorous and leaders analyse data and hold regular reviews to ensure individual needs are being met. As a result, all groups of pupils are doing as well as each other.

The governing body discharges its responsibilities well and, with staff, ensures the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures, which are well established, up-to-date and meet all requirements. The school benefits from the skills and expertise of governors who effectively support the school and hold it to account well for its performance. The governing body is forward thinking, reflective and constantly striving to develop and further improve the impact of its strategic work.

Communication with parents and carers is good, both formally and informally, through a range of channels. One parent wrote: 'I feel the school has reflected well on its provision following parental comments collected via parent questionnaires. By opening this dialogue with parents, I now feel confident that I can communicate easily and effectively with teachers. I feel that the home-school link is much more robust now.' Parents and carers are very supportive of the school, not least through its active parents' and teachers' association, which has raised substantial funding for improvements to the fabric of the school.

Leaders have developed the school as a cohesive community in which pupils show respect, tolerance and understanding for others and there are very strong links with the local community. Pupils learn about other cultures through the curriculum and through their study of other languages. Links with schools in France, Greece, Spain and Germany have helped the school to gain its International School award. The school has correctly identified the need for further development of pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society and plans are underway to link with other schools in different circumstances.

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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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress and reach, and many exceed, the expected goals for their learning by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children clearly enjoy learning and settle well in a happy, purposeful environment. There are good induction procedures, enabling good links with parents and carers and a smooth transition into school life. Very good attention is paid to children's welfare. Trusting relationships between children and staff ensure that children feel safe and secure at all times and develop good attitudes to learning.

A good balance exists between activities directed by adults and those where children make their own choices to effectively develop independence as learners. They start the day by hanging up their own coats and storing their book bags, and enjoy the jobs they are given, such as taking the register to the office. Children understand the need to keep themselves safe and healthy. They understand why they wash their hands before eating. One child said: 'We need to get rid of the germs so we don't get sick.' Good use is made of a dedicated outdoor area, which ensures children develop good physical skills. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to promote language and literacy activities in role-play areas, both indoors and outside. Leadership and management are good and there is a strong team approach, which ensures that assessments made by all staff are accurate and the information is used effectively to plan the next steps in learning.

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

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

An above-average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of these, all agree that the school keeps their children safe and the overwhelming majority agree that children enjoy coming to school. The main concern from a very small minority is the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. During this inspection, inspectors found behaviour to be good and that the school has effective systems to manage any inconsiderate behaviour should it arise. Other sections of the report deal in greater detail with concerns, raised by a few parents and carers, relating to some of the other statements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aldington 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 141 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	66	18	31	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	76	14	24	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	47	25	43	6	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	52	25	43	3	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	57	21	36	3	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	60	16	28	6	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	74	12	21	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)	30	52	16	28	5	9	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	53	19	33	6	10	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	25	43	22	38	6	10	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	40	29	50	3	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	39	67	14	24	5	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	69	12	21	6	10	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



9 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aldington Primary School, Ashford, TN25 7EE

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school and for talking to us about your work. You are polite and friendly and we appreciated the way you helped us find out about your school. You are right to enjoy coming to Aldington because it is a good school. These are some of the things that really stood out.

- You make an excellent contribution to the school and local community by taking on lots of responsibility and helping to make decisions.
- You have an outstanding awareness of how to stay fit and healthy. Lots of you walk or cycle to school and you take part in plenty of physical activities. Well done for this!
- The excellent links with other schools and organisations help to make sure you have many exciting activities so that you learn well.

This is what will help make the school even better and ensure that you continue to make good progress in your learning.

- We have asked your headteacher and the teachers to make sure that you have more opportunities to link learning across different subjects and ensure that you develop your skills and knowledge at the same time as enjoying your lessons, which we know you do.

All of you can help the school even further by continuing to work hard and doing your very best.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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