

Ridgewell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115142
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	379018
Inspection dates	19–20 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Saunders

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Morven Hudson
Headteacher	Denise Madden
Date of previous school inspection	23 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed eight lessons taught by four teachers, and held meetings with senior leaders, groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They also spoke informally with parents and carers, as well as with pupils and staff. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, the school's systems to track pupils' progress and identify their needs, school policies and procedures, and records of the school's self-evaluation. Minutes from meetings and the school improvement plans were reviewed and inspectors considered the responses of parents and carers in the 43 questionnaires returned, as well as responses from pupils and staff.

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

- Inspectors reviewed the effectiveness of strategies implemented by the school to raise attainment, particularly in reading and mathematics at Key Stage 1, and for boys at Key Stage 2.
- They considered whether teaching is sufficiently focused on bringing about improvements in attainment and ensures work is matched closely to the needs of pupils.
- Inspectors evaluated the accuracy of self-evaluation by leaders and the governing body, and whether this has led to improvements in teaching and consequently the outcomes for pupils.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than average and caters for pupils from a wide area around the village of Ridgewell. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils are from White British heritage; a very few pupils are from a range of other backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. These pupils include those with moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and physical disabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Foundation Stage class which caters for pupils in the Reception Year and Year 1. Other classes include mixed ages. The school has achieved Fairtrade School status and uses the Forest School approach to outdoor learning. The current headteacher took up her post in January 2010.

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

The headteacher, together with the staff, has established an accurate view of the school, identified areas for improvement and tackled them effectively. She has brought about improvements to the systems to record and analyse data. In addition, she has brought a strong focus to the school on improving the quality of classroom practice. As a result, planning has improved, teaching is adapted more closely to meet the needs of pupils and the school now provides a good education for its pupils.

- Pupils enjoy learning thoroughly, are proud to be part of their school and their behaviour is good. They like being at school and their attendance is high.
- Strategies to raise attainment are being successful, particularly in English; strategies to improve attainment in mathematics are more recent. In the most recent national tests, attainment rose and was broadly average.
- In most lessons, pupils make good progress because the teachers have a clear picture of their needs. Occasionally teachers spend too long explaining what pupils need to do rather than giving them more time to do the work and the pace of these lessons slows.
- With broadly average attainment and good progress from typically below-average starting points, achievement is good.
- The new systems to record and analyse the progress of pupils are working well and help teachers set appropriate, well-focused targets for pupils. Pupils understand them and as a result know what they need to do next.
- The attainment of boys and girls has varied; the school recognises this and has been quick to respond to the changing needs of small year-groups, often with widely different proportions of boys and girls. In lessons, boys and girls make similar progress.
- The headteacher has ensured the curriculum is being developed in response to the information the teachers have about how well pupils are doing. The development is at an early stage and has not yet had a full impact on the outcomes for pupils.
- Higher-attaining pupils are sometimes given work that is challenging, but this is not yet consistent throughout the school and they do not have enough chances to work independently.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle well and begin to develop their skills as learners. They make satisfactory progress. While teacher-led activities are effective, teachers do not use the opportunities they have to promote writing skills and the use of numbers more widely, particularly when

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- supporting activities children chose for themselves.
- Almost all parents and carers are very positive in their views about the school. As one wrote, 'They bring out the best in my children. A good starting place for any child.' Another wrote 'Ridgewell is a warm, friendly, creative environment where my children are flourishing.' A number of parents and carers commented on how much they appreciate the approachability of staff and the outdoor learning opportunities.
- Pupils are very positive about the fact that they feel safe and well cared for, and they particularly like the Forest School activities. These provide engaging opportunities to learn and develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills outside, as well as widening their understanding of each other and the natural world.
- Pupils have a good grasp of their own beliefs, carefully consider moral issues, and support fully the school's ethos of respect for others.

Since her appointment, the headteacher has evaluated the work of the school accurately, improved the quality of teaching and ensured that there is a clear vision for further improvement. The issues raised at the previous inspection have been tackled effectively and the governing body has gained in confidence and increased its level of support for the school. The school has good capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - developing the curriculum to provide higher-attaining pupils with greater challenge and opportunities to work independently
 - increasing the pace of lessons, to match the best seen.
- Maximise opportunities for children to develop their independent skills in writing and the use of numbers in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly by supporting and harnessing children's own interests.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children have a broad range of skills and knowledge when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage, which are often below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, they have made good progress in their learning, with particular improvements in English and mathematics. Pupils say that they enjoy the work they are given to do, particularly when it is practical or when they learn outdoors. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils enjoyed making models following their visit to a castle; Year 3 and 4 pupils made good progress in their books, writing about their topic on chocolate. Higher-attaining pupils have opportunities outside of lessons to extend their skills, although in lessons sometimes they find work too easy or do not have enough opportunity to get on with their work as soon as they know what to do. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well because the adults are sensitive to their needs and well informed. Programmes and support

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to help them overcome difficulties are carefully focused and they make good progress.

Pupils take on a range of responsibilities to help one another and to make their school a positive place, for example as play leaders or by helping younger pupils. As a result, they get along amicably and help one another to be considerate, especially during break times. They are very confident in the advice they are given about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Behaviour is good and those who have found it more difficult to keep within the school's high expectations are helped to channel their contributions more positively. Pupils say that bullying is very rare and they are confident that any incidents will be dealt with quickly because they know the adults will take them seriously. Pupils enjoy learning about the cultures, celebrations and religions of others, and there are developing links with others who are different from themselves. Pupils show consideration for others through their fundraising activities and care for the environment. Regular opportunities to reflect and think about themselves and the world around them mean that pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good.

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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The headteacher and staff have worked together to implement more effective ways of collecting and analysing information about pupils' learning. The systems provide teachers with an accurate view of pupils' needs and are used well to guide planning and to set helpful targets to ensure pupils know what they need to do next.

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

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Additionally, marking helps pupils to improve their work because teachers make valuable comments, to which pupils respond regularly. Sometimes teachers spend too long explaining what pupils need to do, which constrains the amount of time they have to do the tasks set for them, particularly for pupils who are ready to make rapid progress. The curriculum has been reviewed and the headteacher has developed a more creative approach to ensuring pupils develop the skills and knowledge they need. However, the development is at an early stage and staff are developing their confidence with it, for example to take more account of the views of pupils about the topics they are interested in. Pupils have good opportunities to learn beyond the classroom, for example through the Forest School approach, and the many trips and visitors. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 particularly enjoyed a visit to Hedingham castle, and spoke enthusiastically about their residential trips, which help to widen their view of the world.

The small class sizes and caring ethos mean that adults know the pupils well as individuals and staff go out of their way to ensure any needs are met sensitively, for example through the use of sign language. Most pupils feel that they can talk to adults if they are worried about anything and the school is developing ways to enhance this. The school participates in a range of partnerships which support the development of the pupils, for example to provide high-quality sports and physical education. Similarly, it promotes sciences through the 'Mad Scientist' scheme. The school is effective in supporting pupils who face particular difficulties in their lives, because of their work with a range of specialist partners. The 'Crucial Crew' scheme helps pupils be well prepared for their transition to the next stage of their learning.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's improved use of assessment data has increased the accuracy of target setting and has begun to raise attainment, although it is too early for the full impact to be evident. There is a strong resolve to continue the process of improvement and the headteacher has brought about a keen sense of partnership among the staff, for example to share ideas and best practice in teaching. School leaders make good use of the information they have about pupils to evaluate carefully the progress of any groups which are thought likely to underachieve and ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity. The school identifies and tackles any form of discrimination and helps pupils to appreciate the contributions of all their peers. Safeguarding is satisfactory; all statutory requirements were met at the time of the inspection. The

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headteacher recognises that while policies and procedures meet requirements, there has not yet been time to seek out best practice in all aspects. Parents and carers receive appropriate information about how well their children are doing and the school provides opportunities for parents and carers to find out more about how their children learn, for example in mathematics or reading. There is now a good range of means of communication between the school and parents and carers. The positive views most parents and carers hold mean that many are keen to support the school and there is a variety of ways they can do so.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion; while this is strong locally, links with communities more widely are not as well established. Governance is satisfactory. Many members of the governing body are new to their roles. They are developing their confidence in challenging and supporting the school and are beginning to hold the school to account. The governing body is becoming more involved in the life of the school and better informed about the views of pupils and of parents and carers. The headteacher is helping the governing body to develop ways of gaining first-hand experience of the work of the school. Alongside the effective improvements brought about by the headteacher, it means that the capacity of the school to sustain improvement is good.

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	3
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	3
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

Adults provide children with well-established routines and appropriate support so that they settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage class. As a parent said, 'They seem to want to run into school.' This is the first year in which all the Reception Year children start school at the beginning of the academic year and new arrangements are being trialled to ensure they run as smooth as possible. Much work

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has been done to develop the outdoor area and children enjoy using the resources available. For example, they enjoy exploring the wild garden and forest classroom particularly, or going on 'welly walks'. From their starting points, children make satisfactory progress. By the end of the Reception Year, children have established good attitudes towards learning and have begun to make up ground in their skills and knowledge. Adult-led learning opportunities are effective and well planned. However, teachers do not always support the development of writing skills and the use of numbers, particularly when children choose their own activities. At times, children are too reliant on the adults for their learning and do not make as much progress as they could. Adults are developing ways to make resources more readily available, to increase children's independence. For example, children are encouraged to consider their clothing needs when they go outside and what they need to do to keep themselves safe. New systems to record data about how well children are doing have been introduced and staff are becoming more confident in how they use this information to evaluate the learning needs of the children. Parents and carers appreciate greatly the information they receive about their children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires received by the inspection team was well-above average for the number of pupils in the school. The views of parents and carers reflected the highly positive views of most of the pupils. Most parents and carers agreed with most of the statements. The very large majority of parents and carers agree or strongly agree that their children enjoy school and that they are happy with their children's experiences at this school. A small minority of parents and carers did not respond as to whether the school makes sure pupils are well prepared for the future; a very small minority disagreed. Inspectors found that the school has well established partnerships and procedures to help pupils to feel comfortable and supported during times of transition. Comments showed that a very few parents and carers do not feel positive about some of the changes that have been introduced recently. Inspectors found that the school is led and managed well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ridgewell Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 75 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	74	9	21	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	70	12	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	60	14	33	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	63	12	28	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	31	72	9	21	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	67	11	26	0	0	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	72	10	23	0	0	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)	22	51	11	26	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	63	12	28	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	63	9	21	0	0	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	56	11	26	2	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	23	53	13	30	1	2	3	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	79	7	16	0	0	2	5

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 8 April 2011 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.

21 October 2011

Dear Pupils,



Inspection of Ridgewell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Halstead, CO9 4SA

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school. We were impressed with your good behaviour and how well you get along with one another. We decided that yours is a good school. Here are some of the things we found.

- Most of you make good progress by the end of Year 6, particularly in English and mathematics, because you enjoy learning and your attendance is high.
- You feel safe and know how to stay healthy because the adults care for you so well. You said that you can always talk to someone if you are worried.
- Teachers plan lessons that are interesting, and are working to make the curriculum even more effective, taking account of the things you like looking at.
- The new systems to record how well you are doing are helping the adults to know what you need to do next and set you targets; you know these well.
- Sometimes those of you who find learning easier get work that challenges you, but at others it is not hard enough, and you are not given enough time to do it.
- You like the Forest School activities and learning outside particularly.
- You know a lot about what you believe and have good opportunities to reflect about the world around you. However, you are not as clear about the lifestyles and beliefs of others, particularly within the United Kingdom.

Ridgewell is a good school and we know that the headteacher and staff want to make it even better. We have asked them to make sure that teachers help you to work more quickly, and that those of you who find learning easier are given work that is challenging and more time to do it by yourselves. We have also asked the school to give youngest children more opportunities to write and use numbers.

You can help by making sure you work as hard as you can and continuing to come to school as regularly as you do. Above all, we hope that you will continue to play a positive role in your school and make the most of the learning opportunities you have. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Saunders
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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