

Fordcombe C of E Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118719
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	379669
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Weaver
Headteacher	Ruth Bowers
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. In total, 10 lessons or part lessons were observed. Six teachers were seen teaching along with teaching assistants. Meetings were held with the staff and members of the governing body. Parents' and carers' views were evaluated based on the 67 questionnaires received. Discussions were held with pupils in addition to analysis of their questionnaires. Inspectors also evaluated the questionnaires returned by staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the information about pupils' progress, improvement plans, policies, samples of pupils' work and child-protection information.

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

- How well the most able pupils are progressing as they move through the school.
- The effectiveness of action by leaders to improve writing and mathematics.
- The accuracy and impact of leaders' self-evaluation to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and the implications of their actions for the school's capacity to improve and the role of the governing body.

Information about the school

Fordcombe is a smaller-than-average primary school. Pupils come from the village or immediate surrounding area. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of a Reception class. From this point, classes have a mix of two age groups and almost all classes have some form of staff job-share arrangement. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. The headteacher joined the school in September 2011.

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

Fordcombe is a satisfactory school. Pupils, parents and carers, and staff do much for the community and the school is at the core of village life. Community cohesion is well promoted and helps pupils to learn about the wider world. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and central to the school's ethos.

The work that parents and carers do for the school through the 'Guild' is outstanding. Inspectors endorse the views of staff, pupils, parents and carers when they commented that this is a happy and caring school. Relationships among staff and pupils are positive. Pupils show respect for others and clearly enjoy school, as evident in their above-average rates of attendance. They spoke with enthusiasm, for example, about their recent talent competition.

The good care provided and rigorous safeguarding procedures contribute much to why pupils feel wholly secure in school. Pupils agree that they feel extremely safe and parents confirm this. Pupils explained that staff listen to them and are very kind and helpful when they raise any worries that need to be dealt with promptly. Pupils have an excellent understanding about how to be safe and how to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils' behaviour is good.

The governing body gives good support to the school. Members are very influential in determining its direction and are prominent in the daily life of the school. Following several attempts, the governing body has appointed an experienced and skilled headteacher. A robust review of the work of the school confirms inspectors' findings that pupils' progress by the end of each key stage, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, is satisfactory rather than good. Strengths include the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The achievement of the most able pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, although satisfactory, is recognised by the governing body and the headteacher as an area for improvement.

Clear plans are underway to accelerate pupils' progress in reading and writing, including their use of letter sounds (phonics), but there is more to do. Pupils have average skills in mathematics but are not always adept enough in using calculations to quickly explain and solve problems. Several classes have teachers who share the job. While staff liaise with each other about the curriculum, the day-to-day learning does not always link tightly together to ensure the highest quality continuity in pupils' learning.

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The headteacher is taking action to formalise the ways in which the whole school's quality of teaching and learning is evaluated. She would like to do more monitoring and evaluation of practice, but she, personally, teaches one class for part of the week. Middle managers are at an early stage of developing their roles in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and taking full responsibility for pupils' progress in their subjects. Staff talked of their renewed enthusiasm for improvement. As one put it, 'The headteacher is leading us well with this'. The improving accuracy of the school's self-evaluation, its leadership and pupils' achievement indicate that the capacity to sustain improvement is satisfactory. There is a broad consensus among parents and carers that the headteacher has made a good start and is well supported by the governing body. As one parent noted, 'I am very optimistic for the future'.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' achievement so that progress, learning and the quality of teaching are at least good by July 2012 by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils' learning needs are well met
 - making sure that target setting is as ambitious as possible
 - linking day-to-day learning as well as possible in the job-share classes
 - accelerating children's progress in reading and writing, including their use of letter sounds (phonics), especially in Reception and Years 1 and 2
 - making sure that pupils are confident in using basic calculation skills in order to solve and explain more complex mathematical problems.
- Strengthening the role of middle managers so that they are fully involved and skilled in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and have greater ownership of the subjects that they are responsible for and of pupils' progress through the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy school. Friday morning cross-country runs are very popular. Participation rates for sports and music clubs are high. Pupils show respect for cultural and religious difference. The recent anti-bullying week has helped pupils to reflect very sensitively on how 'words can hurt' others. Spiritual development is enhanced through close links with the local church and within assemblies. Pupils explained very lucidly about balanced diets, the dangers of sugary foods and tooth decay.

From pupils' overall average starting points, they make steady progress in their academic skills so that attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Staff set

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specific targets, but these are not yet consistently demanding. Overall, pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their future lives, personally and academically.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because they have effective individual support and lessons are carefully organised to challenge them to learn and improve their skills. In lessons seen, teaching assistants often helped pupils to learn new things quickly so that they could then work independently with confidence.

The most able pupils, like others, show positive attitudes and enjoy the activities provided. However, the work in lessons demonstrates that activities are not always demanding enough for their capabilities. When pupils were writing recipes for 'beans on toast' for a class cookery book, they began to use new vocabulary to improve the quality of their writing, such as when one wrote about 'the need to simultaneously heat the beans and toast'. However, opportunities were missed to add a creative individual twist to their recipes and to use more descriptive vocabulary. In Years 3 and 4, pupils enjoyed writing poems about 'A Magical Christmas Box' using some good imaginative, descriptive language. Nonetheless, the lack of individual 'hands-on' resources to explore the tastes and smells of Christmas prevented them from being as imaginative and creative as possible and, as a result, teaching was good rather than outstanding.

In mathematics, the quality of learning is satisfactory, although a few good lessons were observed. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils worked on the 14-times table and could mentally calculate the answer to 4x14. Then, by doubling this, they quickly found the answer to 8x14. The work in books shows helpful jottings about how to solve calculations, but the quality is inconsistent. More-able pupils told inspectors that work is not challenging enough and inspectors endorse that this is, sometimes, the case.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Lesson planning is often detailed but does not always identify how the most able pupils will reach higher-level skills. On-going assessment is satisfactory and has been recently strengthened by more rigorous analysis of the progress being made by pupils. Work is regularly marked and some comments guide pupils in how to improve, although the quality of this is inconsistent between subjects and teachers.

The curriculum enriches pupils' wider personal development well, but aspects of provision for basic skills are no better than satisfactory. Improvements are in hand but have yet to have full effect, although there are positive signs. As one of the leaders explained, 'We are looking at improving calculation with a new draft policy'. In Years 1 and 2, pupils worked enthusiastically when explaining how $2+2+2+2$ is the same as 4×2 , but there was not a good link with real-life problem solving. Work in all classes shows that this aspect of mathematics is not well enough planned for. Not all staff use computer programmes equally well to ensure that pupils explain their mathematical problem-solving strategies effectively.

The English curriculum is developing steadily. Some of the poetry in Years 5 and 6 books is of high quality. For example, the work on spring showed skilled use of alliteration, metaphors and similes. Even so, the most able pupils had not explored the works of famous poets to deepen their literary appreciation. In Years 1 and 2, activities do not consistently extend reading, writing or phonics skills to ensure that more reach the higher Level 3 by the end of Year 2.

Links between subjects are developing satisfactorily, as demonstrated when pupils in Years 5 and 6 made presentations on computers about the Tudors. Furthermore, these showed how pupils had thoroughly enjoyed a trip, where they found out about Tudor farming and cooking. In contrast, pupils in Years 3 and 4 visited an observatory and science centre, but their work was not quickly enough followed up because of job-share organisation. Pupils, parents and carers are pleased with the good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils do well in music because of effective teaching and a rich curriculum.

Case-study evidence shows that pupils, especially those who are potentially vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are well cared for. The new leadership has focused very effectively on promoting good behaviour, emotional well-being and confidence. Firm action is underway to increase the support being given to more-able pupils. Office staff are very helpful and act as a strong front line for care.

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All parents and carers returning questionnaires stated that their children are safe and well cared for. Pupils agree that staff are kind and helpful to them.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Inspectors confirm that staff have considerable respect for the headteacher. Teamwork and morale are developing well. Staff said, 'The headteacher has motivated us'. They added, 'We are keen to improve'. Middle leaders have broadly evaluated the subjects that they are responsible for. However, they have not monitored or evaluated the quality of lessons and pupils' progress in a highly comprehensive way. Plans are underway to rectify this.

The governing body asks challenging questions about the work of the school and has forged strong links with parents and carers. The headteacher and governing body have a clear vision, which is leading to raised expectations among staff. Although target setting is adequate, inspectors agree with the headteacher and the governing body that pupils' targets are not yet as aspirational as they could be. Firm action is being taken to raise teachers' expectations. Work has already begun to set more ambitious targets. Although this action is not fully embedded within in all classes, there are signs of improvement. For example, a higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach Level 5 in 2012 than was previously the case.

The governing body constantly looks at how to use the very tight budget to best effect; for example, currently, to ensure that the new headteacher can be released from some of her class teaching as much as possible in order to share her teaching skills throughout the school in the drive to raise the quality of teaching. Increased administrative support has led to increased data being available for leaders.

The school development plan correctly aims to strengthen equality of opportunity for the most able pupils because some make good progress, while for others this is no more than satisfactory. Discrimination, of any form, is not tolerated. The special educational needs and/or disabilities manager has recently been given extra hours and has become responsible for inclusion. This gives the more-able pupils, as well as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, additional support –.

The high quality weekly newsletter helps parents and carers to feel included in their children's school life. Parents and carers' efforts to raise over £7,000 a year make a

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significant contribution to learning resources. Staff are working to increase the number of meetings with parents and carers about their children’s progress and to ensure that they are as fully involved in their children’s learning as possible. This is why engagement with parents and carers is good rather than outstanding.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Documentation and training are well managed. Swift action is taken if any situations arise linked to potentially vulnerable pupils. There is a very clear and effective focus on behaviour, anti-bullying and safety.

Links with the local community are very well developed. The school reaches beyond this. Families are keenly raising funds for a child’s schooling and clothing in Rwanda. Pupils were thrilled to meet the President of Chile following their fund raising for those who had been trapped in a mine. Pupils learn about world leaders and know about aspects of history and geography that enable them to be aware about the diversity of cultures. Pupils talked confidently about different religions. As one explained, ‘Even if people are different colours or religions, they are the same inside’. Leaders are keen to forge a close link with a highly multicultural school in a city as part of the vision to make community cohesion outstanding in the future.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and 9tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy school and settle quickly. Welfare arrangements are good. Children quickly learn the routines and the behaviour that is expected, although a few need a considerable amount of support with this. Staff are kind and encouraging, although their expectations about how to manage challenging behaviour are not always

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consistent. This is partly hampered by job-share arrangements.

Continuity of learning from day to day is usually carefully planned but the quality of activities, including the interventions that adults make, is not always challenging enough for the more able children. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Children have suitable opportunities to select activities for themselves and to take part in more formal learning. The range of activities is sometimes exciting, which encourages children to concentrate, think creatively and work in a cooperative way for sustained periods with others. However, some activities are either overly directed by the teacher, or do not inspire children enough. For example, the role-play area is dull and does not have any dressing-up clothes, and there are too many colouring-in activities.

Overall outcomes, including achievement, are satisfactory but the pace at which children learn phonics and apply them to reading and writing is not accelerating as quickly as it should. Leaders know this and have clear plans in place to improve training and resources. Children enjoy investigating new things for themselves and have planted an attractive outside garden. Occasionally, children have to listen for too long to their teachers and this means that they are too passive. Children thoroughly enjoy being creative, as seen when they made sheep for the nativity scene and when they designed different objects using large bricks. There is a good focus on counting, and adults encourage children to extend their speaking skills suitably, for example, when children used a huge sheep puppet to help them to relate to a story. The outside learning area is underdeveloped.

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 response to the questionnaire was higher than average. Parents and carers have considerable confidence in the work of the school and in its leadership. They are impressed, as are inspectors, about the way in which the school helps the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. A few commented that their children could be making better progress. Inspectors endorse the view that pupils, particularly the most able, could be doing better. Parents and carers are pleased about the strengthened discipline and behaviour guidelines.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Fordcombe C of E 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 105 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	72	18	27	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	81	13	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	34	51	30	45	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	48	29	43	5	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	55	28	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	34	51	28	42	3	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	75	17	25	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)	33	49	31	46	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	40	60	22	33	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	49	28	42	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	46	32	48	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	41	61	23	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	70	20	30	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	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 08 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.



5 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fordcombe C of E Aided Primary School, Fordcombe TN3 0RY

Thank you so much for talking to us about your school. We have found that you go to a satisfactory school that is at the heart of the community. We agree with you that your school is a welcoming place where you are all happy and safe. Well done for behaving well and for showing respect for others. We know that you have all been working hard on improving this, so well done and please keep it up. You do especially well in learning how to be fit and healthy. Teaching is satisfactory. Some lessons are good but there need to be more of these. You work well in lessons and enjoy activities. At the moment, you make steady progress in your learning; some of you make good progress, but others could do better. Several of you talked to us and confirmed this.

Please remember to say thank you to your parents' and carers' 'Guild' as they do an outstanding job in raising funds for your school. The governors also do a good job. Your new headteacher is working very hard to improve the school and all of the teachers are keen to help her. We have asked them to do the following important things.

- Help you to make faster progress. This will mean more good or better lessons. We want those of you who find learning easy to have more challenges. Adults will be setting higher targets and checking lessons to make sure that you are all doing as well as possible. Teachers will be helping you to do even better in reading, writing and mathematics.

You can help as well by always working as hard as possible and by telling teachers if the work is just right or too easy. Please keep up your good attendance and maintain your help for those who are less fortunate than you. Your work for the child in Rwanda is something to feel very proud about. I enjoyed listening to your singing and know that you think sensitively about both the Christian and other religions.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Simmons
Lead inspector

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