

Ryarsh Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118310
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379590
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2012
Lead inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Rowland
Headteacher	Jason Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings

Additional inspector

Clive Reynolds

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work including twenty one lessons involving seven teachers, class assemblies, and the breakfast and after-school clubs. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and looked at documents including those relating to safeguarding, pupils' assessment information and pupils' work. They held discussions with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, and analysed questionnaires from 62 parents and carers, as well as those completed by a sample of staff and pupils.

Information about the school

Most pupils in this smaller-than-average-sized primary school come from White British backgrounds, although a variety of other ethnic backgrounds are represented in small numbers. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below that found nationally. There are six classes, with some pupils taught in mixed-aged classes during the afternoon. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class. All pupils are taught in year groups for English, mathematics and science. The school runs a breakfast and after-school club. The headteacher took up his post in September 2009. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Ryarsh is an outstanding school which has improved well since its last inspection when it was judged to be good. This is chiefly due to the high expectations that staff have of pupils' achievement. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school's qualities, commenting on the dedication of teachers and support staff, their approachability and interest in each pupil's academic and personal development.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding because of the rapid progress pupils make throughout the school. Consequently, attainment is consistently above national averages and is higher than at the time of the last inspection. In particular, pupils' reading skills develop quickly, which together with their love of learning, supports their achievement in all subjects.
- The key to the school's outstanding teaching lies in the precision with which teachers use their understanding of pupils' changing needs to adapt their approaches so that not a moment is lost. Marking gives pupils detailed advice on how to improve, but teachers do not routinely require pupils to respond directly to this feedback.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitude to learning and conduct in lessons and around the school are exemplary. A family atmosphere pervades the school, exemplified in positive parental comments about how older pupils help younger children to settle quickly into school life.
- Outstanding leadership and management are reflected in the strong sense of shared direction and teamwork across all staff, which is outstandingly effective in promoting pupils' experiences and personal development through a rich curriculum. The emphasis on the leadership of teaching has been instrumental in the overall improvements made since the last inspection. Management of performance is rigorous, with scrupulous attention given to areas requiring improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils are required to respond to teachers' written advice about

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how their work could be improved and that they are given the time to do this.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children get off to a flying start, having joined the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are generally in line with those expected nationally. They quickly develop an enthusiasm for learning in school because of the excellent range of activities provided for them, so that they are prepared well for Key Stage 1. In one session, children's imagination was captured when the teacher found and read out a 'letter from an alien' and children eagerly used their well-developed understanding of phonics (letters and their sounds) to write a reply, with most understanding how to form sentences.

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are extremely positive about how teaching enables their children to progress. These positive views are confirmed by the inspection. The strong work ethic of pupils helps them to achieve outstandingly well. The school's data show that, throughout the school, pupils are working at even faster rates than previously. Pupils' attainment in English, including reading and writing, and mathematics is above the national average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6. In the past, pupils have made faster progress in reading and writing than in mathematics, but an emphasis on improving pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills this year has resulted in the gap closing rapidly. Pupils know their tables well which helps their problem-solving skills. All groups, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make similarly rapid progress. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who have some difficulties in their learning from time to time make fast progress because support is tailored carefully to meet their needs.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy the stimulus teachers provide for their learning. For example, pupils in Year 1 improved their subtraction skills well when they 'bought and gave change' for items. In a Year 6 lesson, the well-chosen range of objects such as an Australian rainmaker and chocolate bubbles promoted worthwhile discussion. Pupils extended their vocabulary when describing features as they considered their response to all five senses, and the activity was built on seamlessly as pupils wrote rich descriptions using powerful adjectives to create a clear image for the reader. Such tasks are particularly effective because of pupils' capacity to work collaboratively and share their ideas in a positive environment where everyone's opinion is valued. Pupils show their pride in their achievements in well-presented work, with equal care given to writing in topic work as in English.

Quality of teaching

Pupils are enthusiastic about how teaching helps them to 'learn in different ways,

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with fun lessons' and enjoy 'learning through games, computers and mathematics challenges', showing their understanding of how they learn. Teachers challenge pupils consistently so that they are regularly required to reason and justify their thinking. Detailed marking helps pupils to understand how their work can be improved, and pupils find the tracking grids in literacy and numeracy useful, to monitor their own progress. However, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to respond to their suggestions to ensure that all misconceptions are addressed at the earliest possible stage. High-quality home learning is a significant feature of the school's strategy for learning. Some parents commented on the success of these projects and how teachers provide support if parents have any queries.

Teachers make very effective use of regular themed events within the curriculum to vary and make learning interesting. They use their strong subject knowledge expertly to ensure that broad curriculum experiences promote pupils' academic achievement and personal development. Consequently, pupils develop independence and study skills. Teachers' skilled teaching of reading is seen in pupils' above average reading skills; pupils are confident and successful in attempting unfamiliar words. Skilled teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the outstanding achievement of pupils, including those who are disabled, have special educational needs or have some difficulties from time to time. Any slowing of progress is picked up quickly by teachers and effective action taken to address the problem, including programmes to address specific difficulties and to build pupils' confidence in booster classes.

Much outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers know their pupils and their individual needs well; their planning for lessons is precise and takes learning forward relentlessly day by day, resulting in outstanding teaching overall. Such precision was seen in a lesson where pupils were developing their understanding of percentages. Once the learning intention had been shared with the class, ability groups developed their understanding in different ways from their existing knowledge. As a result, learning proceeded rapidly and many pupils extended their work to solve complex problems. In this instance, the teaching assistant worked with a group of pupils with special educational needs, although in many other lessons teaching assistants work effectively with other ability groups.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are kind, polite and welcoming, for example with a cheerful 'good morning' to adults on their arrival, showing that they are happy coming to school. Attendance is well above average. Parents and carers are extremely positive about the behaviour in the school, and the respect and courtesy shown to them as visitors. Staff are very skilful in modelling and guiding class behaviour so that exemplary behaviour is the norm, whether in the classroom or around the school. Records show that behaviour is excellent over time with very few incidents of any type. Pupils routinely manage their own behaviour without prompting by an adult. Pupils say 'children aren't naughty and cheeky here'. Similarly, they say that 'bullying isn't an issue' and that if there are ever incidents of inconsiderate behaviour or name calling, they are dealt

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with quickly. Pupils understand very clearly the differences between bullying and incidents of poor behaviour. Peer mediators help prevent playground differences escalating whilst the responsibility also provides good leadership opportunities for older pupils.

Parents, carers and pupils are all confident that the school is a completely safe environment. Issues of internet safety are addressed very well, for example in personal, social and health education lessons, so that pupils know how to stay safe and how the school keeps them safe. The recent Year 6 Safety in Action Day developed pupils' confidence in dealing with a range of issues, from farm and railway safety to dealing with slippery conditions such as ice and rain.

Leadership and management

Leaders' relentless pursuit of excellence, with its goal of outstanding outcomes for pupils, is evident from all that the school undertakes. The headteacher has established himself as a highly effective leader, whose success is reflected in strong teamwork across the school and in parental comments indicating appreciation for the 'wonderful school'. Middle leaders are skilled and confident to instigate improvement within their areas of responsibility. The system to track pupils' progress is used very carefully to manage performance. Improving teaching and learning is a constant theme, with anything less than good being deemed as unacceptable. The very supportive atmosphere for staff development and clear expectations for teaching ensure that support and training are focused and enable staff to develop their skills quickly. The governing body uses its understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses to provide well-targeted challenge to ensure the highest possible quality of provision. Robust whole-school monitoring by leaders at all levels and governors has led to firm and sustained improvement since the last inspection, most notably in pupils' achievement, and established a strong capacity for further improvement.

School leaders and governors ensure arrangements for safeguarding, including those relating to child protection, meet statutory requirements. The school promotes equal opportunities very effectively through its teaching, and the rigorous use of data to monitor pupils' progress picks up any differences quickly. There is no evidence of any discrimination. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and gives them many rich experiences. For example, pupils commented on how much they learned when the school was turned into a school of the 1940s for a whole week, with teachers taking on the role of different characters of the period each day, making learning particularly memorable. The curriculum has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the wide range of enrichment activities and lessons such as circle time to promote pupils' understanding of moral dilemmas. The breakfast club and after-school club, together with extra-curricular clubs, address a wide range of needs and interests. They are thoroughly enjoyed by those participating and appreciated by parents and carers.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



27 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ryarsh Primary School, West Malling ME19 5LS

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us recently when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work in lessons. We agree with you that Ryarsh is outstanding and improving all the time. As we promised some of you, I am including the main points of our report below.

- You get off to a flying start in Reception and learn letters and sounds well.
- Your behaviour is exemplary and you are considerate of one another which helps to make learning and playtime enjoyable.
- You are very safe in school because adults follow up any concerns quickly.
- Teachers make learning interesting and you have plenty of opportunities to learn in special events, such as how the school was in the 1940s.
- Your regular attendance helps you to make excellent progress because you do not have gaps in your learning.
- Your headteacher and staff manage the school extremely well and all the staff are keen to make it even better.

We have agreed with the school about the best way forward. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you follow up the comments they make when they mark your work so that you are sure that you have understood their advice fully. You can help by always thinking carefully about your teachers' comments.

We know that you will continue to do your best and work hard. We wish you well in the future.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector

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