

Rolvenden Primary School

Hastings Road, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 4LS

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has continued well on its road of improvement. As a result, pupils make good progress throughout the school due to the good quality of individual teaching support they receive.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are polite and courteous to visitors and to each other. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and play safely with each other.
- Teaching, all of which is good, also has examples of exemplary practice, particularly for the younger pupils.
- The headteacher has a good understanding of what needs to be done to move this good school to being outstanding and the capability to achieve it. All staff and governors share her vision and ambition.
- The school uses comparative national and local data about pupils' progress well to ensure that, even with the small numbers in each year, any underperformance is quickly eradicated.
- The school has developed a wide range of high-quality extra activities, linked to various subjects, that help to prepare pupils well for when they move on to their next school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teachers use a wide range of ways to check pupils' progress, marking is not sophisticated enough. Pupils do not always know how well they are doing on a day-by-day basis.
- Not all leaders take a strong enough role in checking and evaluating whole-school improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 parts of lessons taught by teachers and teaching assistants including one joint observation with the headteacher.
- The inspector heard three Year 1 pupils read, and had formal discussions with a group of Year 6 pupils about their work, reading and other activities they are involved in. Other informal discussions were held with pupils while they were working.
- A discussion was held with three members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body and a telephone conversation was conducted with a representative from the local authority. There was also a formal meeting with another representative of the local authority.
- Analysis was made of the parental questionnaires from a recent survey conducted by the school. At the start of the inspection there were no comments on 'Parent View' (the online survey within the Ofsted website). Following the last day of the inspection seven responses from this survey were analysed. Informal comments were received from talking to two parents and carers.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work, and at a range of documents, including school improvement plans, self-evaluation, information about pupils' current progress and documents relating to safeguarding children.
- Questionnaires were analysed from four staff.

Inspection team

David Collard, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Rolvenden is a much smaller primary school than the national average. Numbers in each year group fluctuate widely each year. Some years have as few as five pupils while the last Year 6 group was made up of 17 pupils. The school has three mixed-age classes comprising a Reception Year and Year 1 class, a Year 2/3 class and a class for Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils. At various times of day these classes split into either year or ability groups.
- Almost all pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs fluctuates widely as does the number entitled to free school meals. As a result, no meaningful comparison can be made with national figures. Nevertheless, the proportions of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs who are supported at school action and those at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are all below the national average. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is above average. All the pupils receiving free school meals are entitled to pupil premium, which is the extra government funding provided to support the progress of specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's floor targets which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - improving the use of marking so it provides pupils with an idea of how well they have done and what they need to do next, and then following up consistently on any weaker areas
 - developing more sophisticated methods of allowing pupils to check their own work and that of others so that they take more responsibility for their own learning.
- Raise the involvement and participation of leaders in whole-school developments by:
 - providing them with opportunities to undertake whole-school checks on progress and then reporting back on this to the headteacher and members of the governing body to help in self-evaluation and improvement planning
 - using this developing expertise to jointly prepare whole-school improvements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils start school in the Reception Year with a wide range of different abilities. Many have skills at below the expected levels for their age in communication, language, literacy and numeracy. Most make good progress and, by the end of the year, have reached the expected levels. This is directly linked to the very strong teaching that they receive and the high concentration on developing basic skills, such as learning letters and sounds, calculating numbers and learning about the world around them.
- Through Years 1 and 2 this good progress continues and pupils enter Year 3 with the basic skills they need to make them independent and good learners. Comparisons with national test results vary significantly due to the small numbers of pupils, but attainment in the present Year 2 is broadly average. More importantly, school information shows that significant numbers of pupils over the last three years have made good and improving progress from their starting points.
- Reading skills for those in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2 are developing well. Pupils have a good understanding of using letter sounds to help them read individual words and use these on many occasions. The better readers are already using different methods to help them understand the story, such as referring to the pictures or trying to decide what will come next.
- Through Years 3 to 6 this good progress continues. Pupils eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs make good and, in some cases, outstanding progress.
- The more-able pupils make good progress with some working at least one and a half years ahead of the standard expected for their age.
- Progress in a wide range of subjects is good, with a high level of skills in subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology. In these subjects pupils use their basic skills in literacy and numeracy to enhance the work they are doing, for example in research of their design or in developing electronic presentations.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good teaching, apparent throughout the school, is characterised by the ability of the teachers to use open and varied questioning techniques to make pupils think hard. Another strength is the way teaching develops skills in lots of different situations. For example, one class acted out their understanding of an Egyptian story and then went about using their exceptionally good ICT skills to make slides for their presentations.
- Examples of best practice are evident in lessons. The teaching of letter sounds with younger pupils, for instance, is very well planned and builds on what has gone before. One teacher's very good knowledge of mathematics has helped address the issue of lack of progress in this subject by encouraging pupils to use real-life problem-solving more widely. The use of a new writing and reading programme is targeted well at those who are at risk of underachieving.
- Teachers use a wide range of different methods in individual lessons such as role-play, discussions with partners and brainstorming. They quickly change their approach if they realise it is not having the impact it should, or if pupils become distracted.
- Teaching assistants, under the direction of teachers, are used extensively for small-group work. Much of this support is of high quality and has helped pupils to make good progress.
- Regular feedback by the teacher to individual pupils and groups is good. While marking is undertaken conscientiously it is not always effective in showing pupils where to make their work even better, or how well they have done.
- Extra provision for pupil premium pupils is effective in tackling gaps in their learning and helps them to catch up. For example, programmes for reading and writing are taught well and have raised pupils' attainment as well as developing their confidence. One boy said during a session, 'I quite like reading now!' as he sounded out the letters of a word.

- The classrooms are bright and enticing learning areas. Teachers celebrate the work of pupils in classroom displays. These provide a useful additional resource to help pupils learn a wider variety of ideas.
- Homework is used to extend the work of the classroom. Those parents and carers who responded to 'Parent View' saw this as a slightly less successful area although older pupils said that it helps them to learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have good attitudes towards learning. They quickly settle into the tasks they are set and generally do so with enthusiasm. They stay well focused on what they are doing when there is an adult keeping a watchful eye. Some pupils are not so good at working independently and this is when their attention can wander.
- Pupils behave well, not perfectly, but they do make sure that when it is important, such as when visitors are around, they talk politely and listen to others. In the playground they play enthusiastically with each other. This is where the advantage of the mixed-age classes really helps as many different ages of pupils play together and befriend one another.
- Boys and girls readily mix with each other and, when there are pupils who are shy or reserved, others take them under their wing to ensure they are not left out.
- Attendance by most pupils is regular and very few pupils are late for school. There has only been one exclusion in recent years.
- Pupils say they feel exceptionally well cared for and are safe at school. They say there is very little bullying and when this does happen it is only minor and 'anyway the teachers deal with it'.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher takes a strong lead in driving improvements. She has addressed the areas which were weaker at the last inspection, and has a clear vision for continuing to raise the achievement of pupils and popularity of the school.
- Checks by the headteacher are regular and effective. Judgements are sound and help improve the skills of individual teachers and teaching assistants. Sometimes there is a lack of formal follow-up to these observations but teachers nevertheless understand what is expected of them to raise their game.
- The management of performance is used effectively to check and improve the staff's skills. The checking of teaching, linked to pupils' progress, is used to decide how salaries will be increased. Where teachers have made positive moves forward this is rewarded appropriately with a careful eye being kept on providing value for money. Equally, the pupil premium funding is checked carefully to ensure it is helping pupils to make good progress.
- The roles of other leaders, while good, are being developed further to ensure they play the fullest role in whole-school improvement. This has included visits to other schools and a closer working partnership with a cluster of local schools. However until recently, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans were initially drawn up by the headteacher with input from others only coming at a later stage.
- The school continues to develop teachers' leadership skills well. This is ensuring that the school has improved rapidly from its last inspection. One teacher has attended a leadership course and another is due to do so very soon.
- The curriculum develops pupils' social and cultural skills well. Activities such as residential visits, woodland days, trips and visitors are recognised positively by the pupils as helping them 'learn more' and join with others 'from bigger schools'. There are good links with the local church to support the curriculum.

■ The local authority has been effective in its support to the school. Governors provided a swift and successful response to a potential fall in standards in 2011. Consultants working with the school analysed and directed improvements to ensure the possible underachievement of pupils was short-lived.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Members of the governing body are keen to do their best and they help drive improvements in the school. They are providing improving and effective support and challenge as their own skills improve through regular training. A good improvement plan is in place, specifically aimed at checking the progress of pupils and how well new ways of teaching have helped pupils to make better progress. Governors use their knowledge of how well the school is doing compared to all schools nationally to support and also challenge the headteacher. They know that provision and teaching are good. They are knowledgeable about performance management and the way that teachers are checked so that strengths are rewarded and weaknesses are addressed. They check the school finances carefully and ask questions about how pupil premium is being spent, and how successful this is for the pupils concerned. Members of the governing body take safeguarding and the promotion of equal opportunities seriously and have ensured that procedures and systems are carefully administered.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118379
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401747

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	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Morgan
Headteacher	Anita Rivers
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 January 2010
Telephone number	01580 241444
Fax number	01580 241496
Email address	headteacher@rolvenden.kent.sch.uk

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