

Saxon Way Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133632
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	328719
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Orpin

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	208
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Burridge
Headteacher	Lynn Andrews
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Path Ingram Road Gillingham ME7 1SJ
Telephone number	01634 852320
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Saxon Way Primary is smaller than average and has a higher proportion of girls than boys. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is far higher than other primary schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also higher than average. Pupils are mainly White British. There is a new Children's Centre, working closely with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), where children are taught in two classes.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. There have been steady improvements because the leadership and management have high expectations and a clear understanding of how to develop their school. The EYFS provides children with a good start to their life at school and the promotion of their welfare is outstanding. The recently opened Children's Centre has had a very positive influence, providing enhanced links with parents and ensuring that transitions in the early stages of children's education are smooth and that they feel secure.

The senior leaders and the governing body have an astute understanding of how the school has improved and the developments that are still needed. Adults at the school work as a coherent team with a shared sense of purpose that is firmly focused on raising standards. Any difficulties are tackled creatively and to good effect, for example by providing positive adult male role models to help raise boys' aspirations. Most parents are very pleased with the school. As one said, 'The atmosphere at Saxon Way is fantastic. What a wonderful school!'

Through the regular checking of teaching and clear guidance on how to improve it, lessons have become more effective, so pupils now achieve well overall. By Year 6, standards are average, representing good progress from these pupils' starting points. Teaching has improved because most lessons are planned well and provide suitably challenging work so pupils know what to do and do not get bored. Teachers encourage their pupils well and relationships between teachers and pupils are trusting, caring and respectful. Most teachers have a clear understanding of how to help their pupils learn. Occasionally, especially in mathematics or in classes for younger pupils, teachers talk for too long and do not use questions or set problems sufficiently. When pupils are not actively engaged in lessons they achieve less well.

Pupils' progress is monitored rigorously and where there are any difficulties, intervention is swift and effective. Teaching assistants are skilled and used well to help meet pupils' differing needs. This prompt intervention has been an important factor in improving pupils' achievement. The curriculum has been developed well, especially in Years 3 to 6, to make it more varied and stimulating. Lessons are planned around interesting topics that are relevant and exciting, so pupils enjoy learning and are enthusiastic to learn more.

Pupils' personal development is good. They are friendly, welcoming and well behaved. They feel safe because adults care for pupils' welfare and learning. The school's robust procedures have resulted in a reduction in absence, but although pupils enjoy school, attendance is no more than average because some parents do not send their children to school regularly.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The EYFS is well managed and children readily settle into school. Children enter the EYFS with skill levels that are well below those expected for their age, especially in personal, social and emotional development, language and communication skills, and mathematical development. They make good progress, particularly in their personal development. The reason for this success is the good quality of provision for children's learning and development. There is a wide range of exciting, imaginative and stimulating activities which encourage them to develop their independence and think for themselves. Skilful use of tracking data and observations by staff are used well to plan the next steps for learning. The well-resourced outdoor area is used creatively, and children are encouraged to make their own decisions about whether they want

to play inside or out. Role play is encouraged, helping children make good progress in their speaking and listening. Children in the Nursery and in the Reception class have the opportunity to mix with their peers for short periods of time, so transitions between classes are smooth. Adults work well together to provide a supportive and calm learning environment for children. The Children's Centre provision contributes well to the overall EYFS. It is already almost full and provides varied and interesting activities in a well-planned, stimulating environment. Children are well supported by adults and their progress and welfare are monitored assiduously. There are excellent links between the different levels of provision so children are totally absorbed and enthusiastic. However, the transition between EYFS and Year 1 needs further development to ensure pupils continue to make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that parents know the importance of the children attending school regularly so that their attendance improves.
- Improve teaching so it offers more challenge and opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in their learning, particularly in mathematics and in Key Stage 1 classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall through Years 1 to 6, even though progress is somewhat slower in Key Stage 1. Standards by Year 6 have risen steadily over recent years. Despite their good progress in the EYFS, pupils join Year 1 with below average standards. They make no more than satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 because some lessons are not as effective as other teaching in the school. As a consequence, pupils' standards by the end of Year 2 remain below average. The decline in Year 2 results over the last two years has been arrested through well-planned school action. Pupils make good progress through Years 3 to 6, especially in the upper years, so that by Year 6, standards are average. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress in mathematics is slower than in literacy or science, so their standards in mathematics are lower. Pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) because good use is made of the ICT suite to enhance their skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of early intervention and well-matched support for their differing needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is good because most lessons are interesting and relevant. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory, but the achievement of those pupils who do not attend regularly is not as good as it might otherwise be. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and they have a clear understanding of what is expected from them. They care for each other and visitors in a thoughtful way; they feel really safe and know adults will help them should the need arise. They know how to stay safe and are confident that any bullying, racism or other form of unkindness will be dealt with promptly. Pupils know well how to stay healthy, have healthy snacks and most make healthy choices at lunchtime. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example, contributing their view to the Hillyfields improvement project. Pupils' preparation for later life is good as a result of their achievement in literacy, numeracy and ICT and their developing understanding of the world of work through other lessons, such as being a journalist in an English lesson. However, despite readily undertaking responsibilities when they are given them, pupils, especially younger

ones, have too few opportunities to think for themselves and sometimes their learning is too passive.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and productive, and teachers manage the behaviour of their pupils well. Teachers mostly plan interesting and stimulating activities, such as a Year 6 English lesson, where the teacher created an electric atmosphere as the story of a mysterious 'Water Tower' unfolded. Generally teachers plan tasks that are well matched to their pupils' abilities and lessons move at a brisk pace. Good use is often made of ICT, either to illustrate in order to help pupils visualise, or as a resource to help them learn in other lessons. Teaching assistants are used effectively to help groups or individuals because they are well informed about how to help individual pupils. Some teaching is less effective, so pupils' progress through the school is not even. In these lessons, pupils have to listen for too long and they do not have enough opportunities to think for themselves. This is particularly true of activities taught in mathematics and in some Key Stage 1 classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and there are creative links between subjects that make lessons interesting and help boys in particular to become more engaged in learning. The curriculum in Years 3 to 6 is particularly exciting, while the plans in Years 1 and 2 do not make such good use of links between subjects. There is a good programme to develop pupils' skills and knowledge in ICT, which helps pupils learn more effectively in other subjects. The school makes good use of the local community for visits, for example to the Strand, and for visitors, such as local artists. Literacy and numeracy are well planned as discrete lessons. The school is beginning to develop opportunities to learn them through other subjects, but this is at an early stage and not fully effective. There are not enough opportunities for problem solving, particularly in mathematics. There is a good range of after-school clubs, such as the BAE Systems car race club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a caring and safe environment. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and there is a good range of support strategies to help those pupils who might need some help, including counsellors, behaviour mentors and caring adults throughout the school. Links with outside agencies are strong and have developed with the opportunities presented through the new Children's Centre. The school works hard at developing partnership with parents. There are good procedures to ensure pupils attend regularly, although further work is needed to reduce absence further. Carefully planned procedures support pupils in the transition to secondary school and the school is developing its procedures to ease children's transition from the Reception class to Year 1. Pupils' work is marked regularly and some comments are informative, but the quality is uneven between classes. Literacy targets help pupils know how to improve, but numeracy targets are not yet used, which hinders their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The strong focus on raising standards has helped leaders work towards a common goal. The headteacher sets a clear vision and has high expectations for the school and the staff. All adults at the school work effectively as a team and full use is made of all the resources available. Leaders at all levels contribute well to improving the quality of education. The school has worked well with the local authority so that there has been steady improvement in pupils' achievement. The monitoring of lessons and pupils' progress is rigorous and regular, contributing to school improvement, but does not fully result in consistently good teaching in all year groups. The governing body is knowledgeable and understands the school's successes and areas for further development. Governors provide suitable challenge to the school's leaders. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good because there are strong links with the local community that enable pupils to become involved, for example in developing local play areas. As one parent said, 'Saxon Way is more than just a school, it makes pupils and parents feel that it is a community.' The Children's Centre has assisted in this development as it has helped the school link with families and health workers. The school is also involved in a global project by having links with Australia in time for the 2012 Olympics.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 January 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Saxon Way Primary School, Gillingham ME7 1SJ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school.

Saxon Way is a good school and it has improved well in recent years. You are working hard and you behave well so you have made good progress. Your lessons have improved because mostly teachers know exactly how to help you learn and they make lessons fun and interesting.

However, sometimes teachers talk for too long or do not make sure you have enough chances to join in. This is especially true in mathematics. In the older years, many lessons cover interesting topics, so you are able to enjoy school and you feel it is a friendly, safe place. Your attendance is improving because your teachers have worked hard to improve it; it is now satisfactory, but there is still room for it to be better. All the adults at the school take care of you well and they know what to do to continue the improvements.

In order to make the school even better, we have asked the adults to:

- make sure you all attend regularly (and you can help with this)
- make sure that lessons are not too easy and help you to take part and think for yourselves.

Yours faithfully,

Sue Orpin Lead inspector