



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Trottscliffe CE Primary School

Kent Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 8-9 June 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Trottiscliffe CE Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mrs S Sudds
Address of school:	Church Lane Trottiscliffe West Malling Kent ME19 5EB
Telephone:	01732 822803
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body as above
Chair of governors:	Mr D Jones
Local education authority area:	Kent
Unique reference number:	118630
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs J Ward HMI
Dates of inspection:	8-9 June 2004

Introduction

1. Trottiscliffe CE Primary School is situated in the village of Trottiscliffe in Kent. It is small, with 53 pupils organised into two mixed-age classes. Most pupils travel some distance to the school from the surrounding rural area. Pupils come from diverse social backgrounds, but there is little social and economic disadvantage and this is reflected in the small proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Eleven per cent of pupils are registered as having special educational needs, none of whom has a formal statement. This is below average. Under two per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and none is learning English as an additional language. Overall, pupils' attainment when they join the school is average or above, but this varies from year to year. There have been some staffing changes since the inspection in January 2003, and the roll has increased, which will change the organisation in September to three classes.

2. The school was inspected in January 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of January 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on three occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In June 2004 an HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2003.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:

- standards of attainment have risen across the school; at the Foundation Stage the pupils are attaining as expected or above in relation to the nationally set early learning goals;
 - the cohort of pupils taking the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests in 2004 was too small to make a reliable comparison with 2003. However, the pupils in Year 6 have made good progress and realistic predictions show they all should attain at least the expected Level 4 in all core subjects, and the higher Level 5 in some;
 - the pupils in the present Year 2 group are on course to match or exceed the school's 2003 figures in the national tests; unconfirmed results show all the pupils have attained the expected Level 2 or above in all subjects, and the proportions of pupils attaining Level 2B and above are similar to, or exceed the national and county figures for 2003 in all core subjects;
 - the pupils' attainment in lessons and in the work scrutinised was generally at nationally expected levels, except in their writing where weaknesses still exist.
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In the older year groups in Key Stage 2, overall attainment is slightly above expected levels in aspects of mathematics and science. The pupils' levels of oracy are generally good; they are articulate and confident speakers;

- the pupils' competencies in information and communication technology (ICT) are improving and are at least in line with the nationally expected levels. Good progress over the past year has ensured that pupils attain higher levels and experience a broader curriculum in ICT. Key Stage 2 pupils have produced some high quality work using a presentational program;
 - the pupils make sound to good progress in most subjects throughout the school. The progress made by the higher attaining pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 is satisfactory, but it could be better, and there are some pupils who are still underachieving;
 - the pupils who have special educational needs are doing well; the progress they make is well monitored and evaluated;
 - the pupils' response in their lessons is good and frequently very good. They have positive attitudes to their work and are co-operative with each other;
 - the ethos of the school is very good, as is the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development; provision for their cultural development is good. In all classes the pupils demonstrate enthusiasm and most are keen to learn, although there are a small minority of younger pupils who can be challenging and find it difficult to concentrate for sustained periods. Pupils are taking greater responsibility and behave well around the school and in the playground. Overall, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good;
 - the environment is interesting and provides a range of stimulating displays of pupils' work for parents and visitors to enjoy. The school has successfully developed the social opportunities for pupils by offering a choice of after-school clubs, including teaching the outdoor gardens;
 - the community links have been strengthened and there are good relationships between the staff and the parents and friends of the school. The school is regarded well in the locality;
 - the quality of teaching was good overall, with some very good teaching at Key Stage 2. The teachers' planning for their lessons gives details of learning intentions, and they are working very well together to ensure that curricular planning is of a consistent standard. The daily and weekly planning documents include teachers' notes and evaluations, which provide useful assessment records. Where weaknesses exist, they relate to the pace slowing in some lessons, or over-long whole-class sessions, resulting in restless and inattentive pupils;
 - the teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and with care. Some good guidance is given to pupils in their books throughout Key Stage 2. The teachers link their marking to the targets the pupils are aiming to meet, and to the learning intentions of the specific lesson. Effective use is made of the
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pupils' self-evaluations. The pupils are learning to provide constructive guidance to help each other to improve their work;

- the data from tests is analysed accurately to set targets for individual pupils and to track their progress. The assessment and tracking procedures are effective tools by which to monitor the progress the pupils make over time. The information is used well at Key Stage 2 to match the work to the needs of different pupils, but there remains room for further development throughout Key Stage 1 in how the teachers use assessments to set the next steps for learning;
- the headteacher leads and manages the school well. She has enabled the school to make steady progress since her appointment in January 2003, leading the staff in identifying the remaining areas of weakness;
- there remain gaps in subject co-ordination due to staffing issues over the past two years. However, the school is fully staffed, and has a well-constructed action plan to train teachers in their roles as subject managers;
- the governors are working diligently to become an effective body which can make useful contributions to the school's work. The committees are increasingly involved in monitoring and the governors are now well placed to take on a more strategic role;
- the local education authority (LEA) has been assiduous in monitoring the progress the school has made, in providing effective training for staff and governors, and in supporting the headteacher and governors in monitoring the teaching and learning. The school has also been well supported by the diocese;
- the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior teacher and staff need to:

- continue to raise the standards of attainment in all aspects of English, mathematics and science throughout the school, and eliminate underachievement;
 - continue to use the information from assessments to inform the teachers as they plan for the next steps of learning for each pupil. Ensure the levels of challenge in the tasks are matched to the pupils' stages of learning;
 - develop the roles of the subject co-ordinators to enable them to become effective leaders and managers in their areas of responsibility;
 - continue to develop the governors' roles in the strategic planning of the school.
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Inspection Findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Standards of attainment have risen across the school; at the Foundation Stage the pupils are attaining as expected or higher in relation to the nationally set early learning goals. At the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is at, or slightly above, the national expectations in all subjects; it is similar for Key Stage 2. However, the levels of the pupils' attainment on entry vary considerably from year to year. The cohort of Year 6 pupils taking the end-of-Key Stage 2 tests was too small to make reliable comparisons with the 2003 results. However, these pupils have made good progress during the year and realistic predictions show they all should attain at least the expected Level 4 in all subjects, and the higher Level 5 in some. The pupils in the present Year 2 group are on course to achieve improved scores in the 2004 tests, particularly in the proportion of pupils attaining Level 2B in reading. Overall, the proportion of pupils attaining a Level 2B or above is similar to or exceeds the national and county figures for 2003 in all subjects.

8. Pupils' reading skills and sight vocabulary in the reception group are developing well, after a very slow start to the year. Most of the pupils retell familiar stories in sequence and read and spell words using their knowledge of letter sounds. The pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped, and there have been too few opportunities during the early months of their schooling to write and make marks. The progress they have made since March has been good, and most are able to record in simple sentences. They can replicate patterns, and in mental mathematics they count forward and backwards to ten and know the numbers that add up to ten. Pupils in reception have made a sound start to their schooling and the progress they have made since March has been good.

9. In English, the range of writing that pupils in Years 1 and 2 undertake has been limited and is reflected in the low scores attained in the school's assessments. More recently the pupils have been given increased opportunities to develop their skills of writing at length. The headteacher has taught well organised and effective 'catch-up' programmes in writing during the year, which has enabled the Year 2 pupils to attain average levels in the recently held end-of-key stage tests. Most pupils sequence stories accurately and retell them orally and in writing. By Year 2 most pupils write in sentences and use simple punctuation correctly; writing throughout Key Stage 1 has improved after being a major focus. Spelling is sometimes weak, although the more able pupils usually spell key words accurately. The pupils' handwriting varies but is improving and most pupils are using a joined script by Year 2. The pupils' vocabulary and their spoken use of imaginative language are generally good. Several pupils read confidently, but they do not always read fluently or accurately. The importance of reading, enjoying books and using books for research has a high profile in the school.

10. Standards in mathematics are similar to the national figures by the end of Year 2, although there are very few higher Level 3 scores. Most pupils recognise and count numbers beyond 20; some show an appropriate understanding of place value and use the four number operations successfully. Pupils are using and applying their mathematical skills soundly in grouping and sharing to solve division problems. However, there are weaknesses in their skills when solving problems without the support of apparatus. The higher attaining pupils use their knowledge of additional facts to count on and back accurately in different ways, and explain the strategies they used. The teacher is devoting an appropriate amount of time to

daily mental mathematics sessions, and more pupils are answering questions with increased speed and accuracy. There is further work to be done, however, to ensure all pupils are given opportunities to answer questions during these sessions.

11. The pupils carry out simple scientific investigations, and their written work shows they observe carefully, sort and classify objects correctly and draw conclusions from their experiments. Some sound practical work has been completed, including sorting and classifying materials. Pupils record their findings, but these are often limited to drawing simple pictures and labelling them, and too much use has been made of worksheets during the year.

12. The standards in English have improved significantly in Years 5 and 6, especially in the range and breadth of material pupils now read. Most pupils competently read a text and note down key points. Their skills and levels of oracy are very good; many pupils are articulate and confident speakers. The school provides excellent opportunities for the pupils to present their work to their peers, and take part in assemblies. The levels of writing at the end of the key stage are rising; more pupils are achieving levels similar to those expected nationally, and some are aiming at higher levels. An appropriate range of writing can be seen throughout the school. The improvements in the pupils' writing are raising the standard of their recording in other subjects, such as science, geography and history.

13. In mathematics at Key Stage 2 investigations are taught effectively. This results in improvements in the pupils' skills when explaining the methods they use, the patterns they find, and the conclusions they draw. Some pupils see relationships, explaining how they reached the answer they did and why. Standards are gradually rising in mathematics.

14. In science, the pupils make steady progress throughout the school. Following the agreed scheme of work and planning to a common format supports the consistency of content and coverage of the subject. Both classes plan for specific investigations, ensuring the key skills of predicting, posing questions, planning for experiments, recording results and drawing conclusions are taught. Most pupils are able to work as part of a group or pair when setting up their own experiments, and can explain the importance of a fair test and how to ensure it is fair. Groups of pupils from Years 2, 3 and 4 worked together to design the pond of their dreams, investigating how they could use it for scientific research.

15. Pupils' competencies in ICT are improving and are in line with the nationally expected levels, or above. Good progress over the past year has ensured that pupils' attain higher levels and experience a broader curriculum in ICT. Throughout the school there are examples of ICT being used as part of cross-curricular work, particularly for word processing. Key Stage 2 pupils have produced some high quality work using a presentational program that incorporated movie and sound clips, and photographs to advertise village life and facilities in Trottscliffe.

16. The foundation subjects are satisfactorily represented in the curriculum, and there has been a steady improvement in the progress made by most pupils. Art and design contributed to the improvements in the school environment, and good standards of work in paper sculpture, painting, collage and textiles are featured in displays. Some effective work was observed in geography when Key Stage 2 pupils used a range of resources, including ICT, to research farming products throughout the United Kingdom.

17. The school has encouraged the pupils to set their own targets for improvement, initially in literacy and numeracy. These targets are helping the pupils to focus on raising their standards of attainment; this is particularly good at Key Stage 2, where pupils evaluate their own progress.

18. The pupils make sound to good progress in most of their subjects throughout the school. The progress made by the higher attaining pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 is sound, but could be better, and there are some underachieving pupils who should make greater progress. In part the legacy of underachievement is being addressed, but a few pupils have gaps in their past learning which prevents them from making as much progress as they could. The school has identified these gaps and is taking steps to address them.

19. The pupils' response in their lessons is good and frequently very good; they have positive attitudes to their work, and are co-operative with each other. The teachers manage the pupils effectively; they make every attempt to ensure the minority of pupils who occasionally present challenging behaviour do not prevent the majority from learning. Encouraged by the staff, some pupils have made very good progress in remedying their inappropriate behaviour.

20. The pupils who have special educational needs are doing well; the progress they make is well monitored and evaluated.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. The ethos of the school is very good, as is provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development; provision for their cultural development is good. In both classes the pupils demonstrate enthusiasm and most are keen to learn, although there are a small minority of younger pupils who can be challenging and find it very difficult to concentrate for sustained periods. The pupils are taking greater responsibility and behave well around the school and in the playground. Overall, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.

22. The regular discussion of behaviour, consideration of rules and general emphasis on co-operation have contributed well to the pupils' moral development. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to discuss right and wrong, and they know what is expected of them. Assemblies enable the pupils to reflect on moral and social issues, as well as the wonders of nature and man's achievement. Sensitive story telling engages the pupils' attention and, at times, creates a sense of awe. Cultural development is fostered through a range of curricular areas, especially science and knowledge and understanding of the world, history and geography, and religious education. The curriculum, together with the displays around the school, reflects the diversity of society and provide opportunities to share and explore a range of cultural experiences. The school takes part in the local events, allowing staff and pupils to benefit from meeting other groups of people.

23. The environment is interesting and provides a range of stimulating displays of pupils' work for parents and visitors to enjoy. The school has improved the social opportunities for pupils by offering a choice of after-school clubs. The governors have taken a role in providing additional extracurricular activities; for example, pupils in the gardening club are growing a wide range of flowers and vegetables.

24. A number of well-planned and carefully implemented projects to improve the learning environment have been undertaken, with further plans for the future. The school is

well supported by the diocese and has been successful in a bid for additional funds for extracurricular work.

25. The community links have strengthened and there is a good relationship between the staff and the parents and friends of the school. The school is regarded well in the locality. Pupils have an important role to play as council members; they appreciate having a voice in the future plans and overall development of their school; for example, the pupils agreed a policy on footwear to eliminate wearing of inappropriate high heels.

26. The pupils' attendance is good and most are punctual to school. There are rigorous procedures for following up poor attendance and lateness.

Quality of education

27. The quality of teaching was good overall, with some very good teaching at Key Stage 2. The teachers' planning for their lessons gives detail of learning intentions. They are working very well together to ensure that curricular planning is of a consistent standard. The daily and weekly planning documents include teachers' notes and evaluations, which provide useful assessment records. The classroom organisation has improved considerably throughout the school.

28. The strengths of the teaching are in the careful planning as a team, increased subject knowledge and positive relationships. The present staff have higher expectations than previously of what the pupils should achieve, and they pace the lessons faster. Effective use is made of the pupils' self-evaluations. The Key Stage 2 pupils have become proficient at evaluating their work and providing constructive guidance to their peers. The classrooms are well organised to support the pupils' learning, with good examples of pupils' work on display. All teachers work closely with teaching assistants and support teachers, as a team with a common purpose. The pupils respond well to this positive approach.

29. The teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and with care, and good guidance is given to the Key Stage 2 pupils in their books. The teachers link their marking to the targets the pupils are aiming to meet, and to the learning intentions of the specific lesson.

30. The school has recognised that there have been weaknesses in the past in the level of challenge set for some of the higher attaining pupils and is effectively teaching the pupils in groups according to their ability, as well as their age, as part of the programme to address the remaining underachievement. Very creative use is made of all teaching and support staff to strengthen this individualised teaching. For example, Year 3 pupils spent a session with the headteacher to explore time, whilst the older pupils worked with a teaching assistant and the pupils in Year 4 worked with the class teacher.

31. The data from tests is analysed accurately to set targets for individual pupils and to track their progress. The assessment and tracking procedures are effective tools by which to monitor the progress the pupils make over time. There is room for further development for some teachers in using assessments to set the next steps for learning.

32. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is good. The teachers and learning support assistants work well together to provide for a range of special educational needs. The individual education plans provide good information about the

pupils' needs and have clear, appropriate targets. Pupils are now routinely involved in setting their own targets.

Leadership and management

33. The headteacher leads and manages the school well. She has enabled the school to make steady progress since her appointment in January 2003, leading the staff in identifying the remaining areas of weakness. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

34. Other levels of management have been underdeveloped during the past two years due to staffing changes, which included several temporary teachers. The school is in a stronger position, now there is a permanent team of staff, and there is a well-constructed action plan to train teachers in their roles as subject managers. Some very useful work has gone into planning the curriculum, determining school policies, providing in-service training for all staff and establishing a number of monitoring procedures. The school's evaluation of teaching, through teachers' plans and from regular classroom observations, is now well established. The school has accurately identified where weaknesses remain in pupils' skills and competencies, and has systems to address these shortcomings.

35. The headteacher and senior teacher have written a school improvement plan which details their vision and proposed actions for the forthcoming year, and also outlines longer-term plans. This is a useful management tool, though the governors will need to be involved in the future longer-term planning. The headteacher is confident that all staff are able to help consolidate the school's progress and to make further improvements.

36. The governors are working diligently to become an effective body which can make useful contributions to the school's work. The committees are increasingly involved in monitoring and the governors are now well placed to take on a more strategic role. The LEA has provided initial training for the governors to enable them to develop this strategic role, but further support would be valuable.

37. The LEA has been assiduous in monitoring the progress the school has made, in providing effective training for staff and governors, and supporting the headteacher and governors in monitoring the teaching and learning.

Implementation of the action plan

38. The inspection report of 2003 required the school to address three key issues. These related to: improving management; improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' attainment; and improving the balance of the curriculum. Good progress has been made overall.

39. The teaching has improved considerably and is now good or very good. There are many strengths in the lessons, and the teachers motivate and enthuse the pupils. There remain gaps in the pupils' learning from reception to the end of Year 3, which will require consistently good teaching to address. The school has resolved how to collate and report the assessment data, and the systems to track and monitor pupils' progress are good. Curricular planning has been improved and makes well-considered links between different subjects, such as ICT and geography. The teachers continue to use external resources, artefacts and out-of-school activities very effectively. The pupils have many good opportunities to take on responsibility and show initiative, especially at Key Stage 2.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in January 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in July and November 2003, and in March 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2003.

In June 2004, one HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Eight lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and two registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior teacher, and telephone discussions were held with representatives from the LEA; informal discussions were also held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.