



**Better  
education  
and care**

Inspection report

# West Malling CE VC Primary School and Language Unit

Unique Reference Number 118633  
LEA Kent  
  
Inspection number 273577  
Inspection dates 8 and 9 February 2005  
Reporting inspector Mr R Ellis HMI

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.

Type of School	Primary	School address	Old Cricket Ground
School category	Voluntary Controlled		Norman Road
	<i>Diocese of Rochester</i>		West Malling
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Kent
			ME19 6RL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 842061
Number on roll	112	Fax number	01732 842267
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr P Wallis
Date of previous inspection	September 2003	Headteacher	Mrs L Bickers

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	8 March 2005	273577

## Introduction

When West Malling CE VC Primary School was inspected in September 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on three occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in February 2005.

### Description of the school

The school serves the local community of West Malling near Maidstone. The language unit draws its pupils from a wider area in West and Mid Kent. The school is smaller than average, with 112 pupils on roll. The school's roll has fallen significantly in recent years, mainly because a recently opened school attracted pupils from the area. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds and 32 per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is above average. About half the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, including 25 who have a Statement of Special Educational Need, which is very high. All 19 pupils in the language unit have a Statement of Special Educational Need relating to speech and communication and some have additional special needs. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school at various times during the year.

---

© Crown copyright 2005

*This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.*

*Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.*

## Overall effectiveness of the school

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.

West Malling CE VC Primary School and Language Unit had difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced staff in the past. However, the school is now fully staffed and provides a sound education for its pupils. The headteacher and the staff have worked hard to raise standards, which are improving, but remain low; some pupils do not achieve the standards that they should. The pupils' attitudes and their behaviour are satisfactory; many have developed good work habits and enjoy learning. The curriculum meets national requirements and the pupils benefit from a wide range of additional clubs and activities. The recent opening of a new school building has resulted in a much better environment for learning and has released space for the establishment of a successful breakfast club and a specific area for teaching small groups of pupils.

## Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of September 2003 required the school to take action to address issues concerned with the pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, leadership and management, and improving the curriculum. There has been good progress in relation to leadership and management and improving the curriculum, and reasonable progress elsewhere, although raising standards remains a priority.

## Capacity to improve

West Malling is an improving school. The headteacher and the senior management team have a clear focus on raising standards. The headteacher is well supported by the staff and the school's governors. Systems for monitoring the school's performance and tracking the pupils' progress are well established and the analysis of the data that these systems provide is used to inform decisions about the deployment of additional support and resources. The school's strategic plan recognises the school's strengths and areas for development and prioritises actions appropriately.

## What the school should do to improve further

The school's development plan recognises the areas where improvement is needed. However the key priorities are to:

- raise standards;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching;
- develop the role of the curriculum team leaders.

## Achievement and standards

The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average overall. The pupils are given a good start in the Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress towards the nationally set early learning goals. The pupils' progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been satisfactory over recent terms and most pupils now make steady progress towards their targets. Previous weaknesses in teaching and the pupils' poor attitudes resulted in significant underachievement, as reflected in the 2004 national test results that were well below average. However, over half the pupils in the small cohort of Year 6 pupils had a Statement of Special Educational Need and the progress they made in relation to their prior attainment was broadly in line with that made by pupils in similar schools. Over the last three years, the performance of girls at Key Stage 1 has been close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics but the performance of boys has been well below average.

The pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are beginning to benefit from the more effective approaches used by the teachers, even though their progress is often from a low starting point.

The school has identified groups of pupils that are underachieving and has implemented suitable programmes to boost their attainment.

## Personal development

The inspection in September 2003 found that the pupils' attitudes and behaviour in Years 3 to 6 were unsatisfactory and that their attendance was below the national average. The new headteacher took firm action to challenge inappropriate behaviour and the number of short-term exclusions initially rose. However, the pupils' attitudes and their behaviour have improved and there have been no exclusions in the current academic year.

The pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. For example, the older pupils organise and manage their own games and activities in the playground and support the younger pupils. The school has continued to challenge poor attendance and as a result the rate of attendance has improved and is broadly in line with the national average. Many pupils now have very good attendance records.

Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school provides good opportunities for the pupils to learn about their local community and other cultures, and there is a good range of after-school activities to extend and enrich the curriculum.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is much improved when compared with the inspection of 2003 and is satisfactory overall; it was at least satisfactory in all the lessons seen and good in five. The best teaching was seen in Key Stage 1. Lessons were carefully planned and relationships were good. In the more effective lessons, the teachers and teaching assistants encouraged the pupils to think about and discuss what they were doing, although sufficient time was not always given for this. Marking and assessment are beginning to be used to inform lesson-planning, but sometimes too much was attempted in a single lesson, rather than building systematically on the pupils' prior knowledge. The tasks set were sometimes too easy for the more capable pupils and too difficult for the others and there was not always a clear enough indication of the purpose of activities and how they would be assessed.

The school has developed a methodical system for tracking the pupils' progress. The assessment information is used to plan tasks that match the pupils' needs in English, mathematics and science but is not used consistently to raise attainment in other subjects. Targets are being developed for individual pupils, but they are not always sufficiently challenging, or referred to frequently enough to ensure that progress takes place at an appropriate rate.

The curriculum is broad, balanced, and based on national requirements. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is much improved and each class is timetabled to use the new computer suite. This has resulted in rising standards in ICT. The pupils who have special educational needs have full access to the curriculum and they are well supported in lessons.

Links with parents are good and continue to strengthen; for example, through the introduction of a home-school contact book. A group of parents has reorganised the library and has funded the purchase of additional books, furniture and soft furnishings. The library is a welcoming area that encourages the pupils to take an interest in reading. The work of some pupils has been published nationally in a poetry anthology which is on prominent display. There is a structured parents' support network and workshops and parenting support classes have been held at the parents' request.

The school has good general routines to ensure the pupils' safety and well-being. The pupils discuss moral and social issues in lessons and are encouraged to explore their own and other cultures. The pupils are confident to turn to adults for help and the 'playground friends' initiative and the school council ensure that pupils are able to express their views and opinions and practise their citizenship skills.

## Leadership and management

The school is well led and soundly managed. The falling numbers of pupils meant that the staff group and senior management team had to be restructured. This has been completed successfully and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The headteacher is well

supported by the staff and governors. There are sound systems to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and the teachers have responded positively to feedback following observation of their lessons, and have worked hard to improve their practice. However, the role of the subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped and presently too much responsibility for subject development rests with the senior managers.

The governors are effective in holding the school to account for the standards that it achieves. They are regular visitors to the school and conduct their own monitoring so that they are well informed about school's progress. Expenditure is closely monitored and the school's financial planning cycle is clearly linked to the improvement plan. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The local education authority's support has had a positive impact on improving provision at the school. Consultants and advisers have helped teachers to develop their practice and training and guidance has been provided for governors.

## Appendix – Information about the inspection

West Malling CE VC Primary School and Language Unit was inspected in September 2003 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996. 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 March, June and October 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of September 2003.

In February 2005, one HMI and one Additional Inspector 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.

Fifteen lessons and two assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed around the school and on the playground at break and lunchtimes, and samples of their work were inspected. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, and informally with other staff and groups of pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was 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 September 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet 'Complaining about HMI-led Ofsted inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2005. This document may be freely reproduced in whole or in part, for non-commercial purposes, provided the source and the date are acknowledged.