



Inspection report

Victoria Road Primary School

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 118369
LEA Kent
Inspection number 274739
Inspection dates 20 and 21 April 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	Victoria Road
School category	Community		Ashford
			Kent
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		TN23 7HQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01233 620044
Number on roll	189	Fax number	01233 664211
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr Alan Allcock
Date of previous inspection	June 2003	Acting Headteacher	Mr T Hogg

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	25 May 2005	274739

Introduction

When Victoria Road Primary School was inspected in June 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 four occasions to monitor its progress, and reinspected the school in April 2005.

Description of the school

The school serves the local community in the southern part of Ashford and has 189 pupils on roll, mostly from white British backgrounds. Nineteen per cent are entitled to free school meals, which is about average, but this figure does not fully represent the level of social disadvantage in the local community. About one fifth of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, which is broadly average. The proportion of pupils who do not speak English as their first language is higher than in most schools. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school at various times during the year.

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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.

Victoria Road Primary School is an improving school and provides a sound education for its pupils. Determined leadership from two acting headteachers and hard work by the staff have resulted in standards which are improving, but which remain low. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and most enjoy learning. Their progress is broadly satisfactory but despite teaching which was satisfactory or better in all lessons, the pace of learning is sometimes too slow to overcome the legacy of underachievement. The curriculum meets national requirements and the pupils benefit from an increased range of additional clubs and activities.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of June 2003 required the school to take action to address issues concerned with raising attainment, improving the curriculum and assessment, and improving leadership. There has been good progress in relation to improving leadership and the curriculum and reasonable progress in raising attainment, although raising standards remains a priority.

Capacity to improve

The school is well placed to improve. The acting headteacher has developed a sense of purpose within the school and promotes high aspirations. The members of the senior management team have a clear focus on raising standards and are well supported by the school's governors. However, the role of the curriculum co-ordinators, particularly for the foundation subjects, is underdeveloped. There is an appropriate programme to monitor the school's performance and systems to track the pupils' progress are well established. The resulting data is carefully analysed and the information is used well to determine the way subsequent work is planned. The school's improvement plan recognises the school's strengths and weaknesses and has appropriate priorities for action.

What the school should do to improve further

The key priorities for the school's development plan are to:

- raise standards;
- improve the pace of learning to remedy underachievement;
- develop the role of curriculum leaders.

Achievement and standards

The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average overall and a significant proportion has speech and language difficulties. The pupils in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress towards the nationally set early learning goals and the pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have made satisfactory and sometimes good progress in recent terms. However, weaknesses in past provision have resulted in significant underachievement and at the end of Key Stage 1, the results of the 2004 national tests were well below average. In reading and writing, around half the pupils failed to achieve the minimum standard expected for their age. The Key Stage 2 results were below average overall but were an improvement on those of the previous year, especially in mathematics. However, in English, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 was well below average. Too many pupils made unsatisfactory progress in relation to the levels they achieved at the end of Key Stage 1 despite beginning to make at least satisfactory progress in most lessons and good progress in some. Past weaknesses in the provision for literacy and numeracy have resulted in underachievement in both these areas which continues to hinder the pupils' learning.

The school's system for tracking the pupils' progress has identified groups of pupils that are underachieving and suitable programmes have been implemented to boost their attainment.

Personal development

The relationships between pupils and adults are good and most pupils behave well. They focus increasingly well on their tasks and many are taking responsibility for their own learning. The pupils' attitudes are at least satisfactory and often they are good. More demanding activities and higher expectations in recent terms have resulted in a reduction in the time wasted in lessons. Most pupils arrive punctually and settle quickly; many sustain their concentration without needing further prompting. Most pupils are keen to learn and work well with others in pairs or groups. Attendance is satisfactory. In 2003, attendance was well below average, but in 2004 it had risen to 94.7 per cent and was broadly in line with the national figure. Punctuality and attendance have improved as a result of the work of key staff and the support from outside agencies.

The overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. Assemblies are used well to reinforce the concept of the school as a community and to develop the pupils' understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. Aspects of their own and other cultures are explored in lessons and celebrated through work on display. The pupils accept responsibilities and make sure that their views and opinions are heard. Many pupils participate in the range of visits, clubs, and sporting activities that the school offers. The pupils respect their environment and, for example, appreciate why organic waste is collected separately from other waste so that it can be composted and used by the school's gardening club.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; it was at least satisfactory in all the lessons and in almost half it was good or very good. The teachers have worked hard to remedy the weaknesses in teaching identified during the monitoring of their lessons and have responded positively to the advice given by senior managers, the school improvement partner, and local education authority (LEA) advisers. The teachers are increasingly working collaboratively and the support that they give to each other has had a positive effect on improving the overall quality of teaching.

The lessons were based on appropriate learning outcomes and were generally well planned so that they took proper account of the needs and interests of different groups of pupils. Teaching was often conducted at a brisk pace and teachers ensured that pupils were attentive and listened carefully. However, the pace of learning is sometimes too slow and does not give the pupils sufficient opportunity to rectify their previous underachievement. The teachers and teaching assistants are increasingly working together as a team and the teaching assistants are making a positive contribution in the classroom. The school recognises their important contribution and is involving them in training and further professional development.

The school has established effective systems to assess the pupils' achievements and to track the progress that they make. Analysis of the information from tests and assessment is used to identify pupils or groups of pupils who need additional support. Increasingly better use is being made of this data to gauge the impact of the support on the pupils' learning. Improvements have been made to the way that the pupils' work is marked, targets have been developed and they are used to help the pupils understand what they need to do to move forward.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and based on national requirements. Stronger links are being developed between the subjects and this provides the pupils with sound opportunities to develop basic skills. A recent focus on improving the pupils' reading has resulted in a marked improvement in the overall standard of reading. The school's provision for special educational needs is satisfactory.

The school is a caring and supportive environment and due regard is paid to the pupils' safety, health and general well-being. Most pupils are confident to turn to adults for help, and a 'buddy' system has been implemented to help those pupils who need additional support. The provision of a good range of play equipment and improvements to the outside areas enable the pupils to play games and exercise vigorously.

Leadership and management

Both the acting headteachers, who have led the school since it was placed in special measures, have made a positive contribution to improving the school. The current acting headteacher, who has completed two terms at the school, provides clear and effective

leadership. He sets high expectations of the staff and the pupils and is purposeful in his pursuit of whole-school improvement.

Teaching and learning are effectively monitored. The acting headteacher has a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the school and is encouraging and supporting teachers to develop their expertise.

The deputy headteacher is a positive role model and provides good support for the acting headteacher. Some subject co-ordinators are actively monitoring progress in their subjects. However, the school acknowledges that the role of the subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped in the foundation subjects.

The school improvement partner has been effective in the role of critical friend and has developed a sound professional relationship with the staff and governors.

The governors hold the school to account for the standards that it achieves. Appropriate training has taken place in order that governors are able to evaluate the school's performance. The governors are regular visitors to the school and conduct their own monitoring so that they are well informed about the school's progress. Expenditure is closely monitored and the school's financial cycle is linked to the school's improvement plan. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The governors have planned to appoint a substantive headteacher for September 2005.

Relationships with parents have improved and the 'Friends Association' has been revived. Parents are invited to regular assemblies that celebrate the pupils' achievements. There are plans to encourage the parents to participate more widely in school events and to take a more active role in their child's education.

The LEA has played a part in improving the school and in recent times the support has become more sharply focused. Advisers and consultants have given teachers useful advice and support which has strengthened aspects of teaching and curriculum planning. The governors have also benefited from support and training provided by the LEA's governor support services.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Victoria Road Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in June 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 January, June and October 2004 and in January 2005 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of June 2003.

In April 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.

Fourteen lessons, three registration sessions and one assembly 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 acting headteacher, the chair of governors, a representative from the LEA and informally with other staff. 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 June 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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