



Inspection report

Milstead and Frinsted CE Primary School

Unique Reference Number 118648
LEA Kent

Inspection number 275372
Inspection dates 28 April 2005
Reporting inspector Ms L Soden 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	School Lane
School category	Voluntary Controlled		Milstead
	<i>Diocese of Canterbury</i>		Sittingbourne
Age range of pupils	4 to 11 years		Kent
			ME9 0SJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01765 830241
Number on roll	45		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs C Blackbrow
Date of previous inspection	February 2003	Headteacher	Mr C Dunn

Age group	Published	Reference no.
4 to 11 years	3 June 2005	275372

Introduction

When Milstead and Frinstead CE Primary School was inspected in 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

Milstead and Frinstead CE Primary School is a very small school with 45 pupils on roll, taught in two mixed-age classes. The pupils come from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, although the catchment area is generally prosperous. Three pupils are eligible for free school meals. No pupils speak English as an additional language. There are 21 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs but none has a Statement of Special Educational Need. The number of pupils attending the school has stabilised, with fewer entering or leaving part way through the year. The anticipated numbers for September 2005 are broadly similar to the current roll.

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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.

Since the inspection of February 2003, which found that the school required special measures, there have been significant changes in staffing, leadership and the organisation of the school. Under the successful and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, the school is providing a good education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good. The pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress in lessons. Standards of attainment are rising. The challenge of making appropriate provision for the mixed-age groups has been met through improvements in the curriculum and lesson-planning, a generous allocation of teaching assistants to each class and by the headteacher teaching literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2. However, a lack of sufficient computers constrains the pupils' progress in information and communication technology (ICT). The headteacher and the governors have planned carefully for the future; financial management is prudent, allowing well-considered improvements to the school's fabric and resources to be sensibly staged over the short and medium term.

Improvement since the last inspection

The inspection of February 2003 required the school to address key issues on improving the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring that pupils have access to a full and balanced curriculum and setting a clear educational direction for the school. In addition, there needed to be greater rigour in supporting and monitoring teaching. Progress in relation to all the key issues has been good.

Capacity to improve

The school has a good capacity to sustain and build on its recent improvement. There has been an appropriate and consistent emphasis on improving the pupils' behaviour and attitudes, creating a positive climate for learning. The school is well organised; good systems, which are implemented consistently and reviewed regularly, ensure that the needs of each pupil are met effectively. Planning for the future judiciously balances the scope of development with the capacity of a small team of staff. The appointment of an experienced headteacher for September 2005 will complete the permanent staff team. The governors are rapidly building their capacity to provide appropriate challenge and support. The local education authority (LEA) has worked closely with the school, giving crucial support and challenge for improving the provision. The impact of the LEA's work has been good. The LEA, rightly, intends to continue to provide an enhanced level of support. The school benefits from the sustained commitment of the wider community; many parents and governors give their time generously to enrich what the school is able to offer.

What the school should do to improve further

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

- continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring that the pupils have access to an appropriate and wide curriculum;
- ensure that the pupils' behaviour and attitudes continue to improve;
- improve the pupils' access to ICT.

Achievement and standards

The pupils enter the school with broadly average ability. The improving provision in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has enabled the pupils to make a good start, rapidly acquiring the necessary social and learning skills to achieve well. There was a rise in the standards attained by the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2004, when compared with the previous year. The proportion of the pupils gaining the higher Level 3 in reading and mathematics showed a marked improvement; however, standards in writing were lower. This weakness has been systematically tackled and standards of writing in lessons are improving.

Three pupils took the end-of-Key Stage 2 national tests in 2004, too small a number to make comparisons meaningful. However, the school accurately judged that some pupils in Key Stage 2 were underachieving, largely as a result of significant gaps in their learning. In addition, too much of the pupils' writing was inaccurate and poorly presented, in contrast with their oral responses, which often indicated that they had a good grasp of the subject. These weaknesses have been successfully addressed through good systems for tracking the pupils' attainment and progress. Assessment information is used well to modify planning and teaching groups to meet the pupils' emerging needs. Current information shows that most pupils have met or exceeded their targets for improvement. The small numbers in Key Stage 2 have allowed the younger pupils to be grouped with the older pupils, where appropriate, resulting in a marked rise in standards for the highest-attaining pupils. Standards in ICT are below the expected levels because the number of computers available for the pupils is limited.

Personal development

The school provides good opportunities for the pupils' personal development. The Christian ethos of the school has been developed thoughtfully, through assemblies and the many links which have been forged with the wider community. The values which the school promotes are evident in the stimulating displays in classrooms and public spaces. The school successfully highlights and celebrates a range of achievements. The consistent focus on improving the pupils' behaviour has created a more harmonious and co-operative culture. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes were satisfactory or better in all the lessons;

their approach was more settled and they were clear about routines and what was expected of them. The headteacher's programme of meeting with groups of pupils has made a good contribution to the improving climate. Isolated examples of immature behaviour were well handled.

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Acts of worship provide good moral, social and spiritual experiences and are marked out with time for prayer and reflection. The school has co-operated well with other schools, providing the experience of working in larger groups for its pupils and allowing them to participate in projects such as a science week. The school has a range of extracurricular activities that enhance the pupils' personal development. The pupils have good opportunities to extend their understanding of different faiths and cultures.

Despite satisfactory attendance overall, the school continues to prioritise the importance of consistent attendance and has tackled the small number of pupils with unsatisfactory attendance vigorously. Punctuality is good.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is good, and has improved significantly since the last inspection in 2003. It was at least satisfactory in all five lessons, including four which were good. The staff have worked hard to redesign the curriculum, ensuring that the pupils have continuity in their learning and eliminating the repetition which was a past weakness. French has been introduced in Key Stage 2. The outside area, which has been developed for the younger pupils, is exemplary; it has been carefully planned to be available throughout the year and provides a stimulating and challenging environment. The classrooms and public spaces throughout the school are vibrant and well kept. The rooms for the youngest pupils have been significantly improved since the last inspection, providing a very good setting to encourage their learning and creativity. Sensible decisions have been taken over the timings of the school day, providing a more positive start in the morning and creating sufficient time to ensure the appropriate coverage of the curriculum. Break times have been shortened to increase teaching time and to remove less productive short sessions.

The teachers have responded very positively to advice from consultants and the outcomes of lesson observations. There has been a significant improvement in lesson-planning and in the quality of learning resources. The lessons were well planned and prepared, with an interesting range of resources and activities, giving the pupils a suitable balance of structured tuition and independent learning. Teaching assistants provided very good support, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 class, where their work was carefully planned, skilful and highly effective. The teachers' planning was sufficiently detailed to provide appropriate objectives and activities for the different age and ability groups in each class.

Procedures for identifying and supporting the pupils who have special educational needs are effective. The pupils' needs are accurately assessed and suitably supported with well-

focused individual educational plans. These pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress.

Systems for assessing and recording the pupils' progress and achievement have been very well developed and are good. The school has an accurate and up-to-date overview of the pupils' progress, and uses this assessment data efficiently to set targets and to modify and develop provision. Regular assessment and moderation of samples of the pupils' writing has enabled the teachers to develop an accurate understanding of levels of attainment. There has been an improvement in the quality of the teachers' marking, which identifies more consistently what the pupils need to do to improve, or how to achieve their targets.

The links between home and school are strong. The school has made every effort to improve communication with parents and to promote the school to the wider community. Parents are well informed about developments in the school, its procedures and expectations.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides good leadership, articulating a clear vision for the school's improvement, which has swiftly won the confidence of the governors and the parents. A three-year school improvement plan is being written, following consultation. The priorities for development have been appropriately identified to consolidate the recent improvements. The headteacher's methodical and supportive approach has created an effective team. His monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is rigorous and his judgements are accurate. The teachers receive detailed written feedback to outline strengths and areas for development. In this small team, each member of staff has to carry multiple responsibilities and developments are being carefully managed to ensure that the rate of progress is realistic and sustainable. A good foundation has been established for the new headteacher who will take up her post in September 2005.

The governing body has benefited from training and good-quality information from the headteacher. The committee structure has been re-established and a buildings committee has been created, ensuring a longer-term strategy for maintaining and developing the school. All the governors have been involved in analysing the school's performance, consequently their understanding of standards is more secure. Further training is planned. New governors are being inducted effectively.

The LEA's support for the school has been decisive and effectively co-ordinated. The decision to change the interim arrangements for the school's leadership was well handled and prevented the school's improvement from stalling. There has been a good blend of challenge and support for the headteacher. The school has valued the consistently high-quality support over developing the provision for the youngest pupils. The excellent area for outside play is an example of the impact of this work.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

Milstead and Frinstead CE Primary School was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in February 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 September 2003, and in January, May 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 February 2003.

In April 2005, an HMI returned to inspect the school for one day. 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.

Five lessons 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 and two representatives 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 February 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

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