



Ford End Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115115
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279515
Inspection dates 3 July 2006 to 4 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Peter Lewis AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Main Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		CM3 1LQ
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01245 237209
Number on roll	49	Fax number	01245 237560
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Derek Dickinson
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Hazel Arnill

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	3 July 2006 - 4 July 2006	279515

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small village school takes children from age four to 11. All pupils are White British and come from a range of social backgrounds, including a small number who are from Traveller communities. When children are admitted to the Reception class, their attainment is broadly average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The number with a statement of special educational need is about average but there is a larger than average number who are identified with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has experienced considerable staffing difficulties at all levels over the past three years but a permanent headteacher was successfully appointed in April 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is an improving school that provides pupils with a satisfactory education and promotes their personal well-being effectively. Following a marked decline in its effectiveness, the school now views itself as satisfactory and inspection evidence supports this view. Although pupil numbers have gradually declined, the school is popular with parents and pupils who think it is doing a good job. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory as the school has tackled all the issues from the last report and has successfully raised standards. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, children make steady progress and achieve in line with their abilities. As pupils move up through the school most continue to make sound progress and achieve satisfactorily, including those with learning difficulties and those from different backgrounds. Standards are now average for English, mathematics and science. Standards, particularly in mathematics and science were too low in 2005 due mainly to the limited progress made by higher attaining pupils, particularly in Years 3-6. This was as a result of weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum. Recent initiatives have brought about improvements in teaching. It is now satisfactory overall, but is consistently good in the Reception and Key Stage 1 class and there are good features in the teaching of Year 5 and 6 pupils. The school recognises that more remains to be done to help teachers plan better investigative work in mathematics and science. The school has made a good start in developing this further. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school provides a suitable range of activities for most pupils. However, tasks set do not always provide higher attaining pupils with sufficient challenge. The atmosphere in the school is very positive and all staff work very hard to make every child feel valued. The views of staff, pupils and parents are sought and everyone is positive that their views are listened to and acted upon. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has been particularly effective in halting a decline in standards and putting the school back on course. The headteacher has, in a very short time, successfully established a common vision for the future of the school. Staff and governors are working increasingly well as a team to turn that vision into reality. This accounts for the increase in the progress made by pupils and demonstrates that the school is well placed to continue improving. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more challenging work for higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 2 so that they achieve as well as they can.
- Ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently well constructed to enable pupils to make good or better progress in their understanding and application of problem-solving skills in mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

School assessment data show that pupils reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. Although national comparative data must be treated with caution for small schools because the numbers of pupils in each year group make the statistics unreliable. The school has not shied away from the fact that standards and achievement were both too low, particularly in mathematics and science in 2005. However, the analysis of current assessment data indicates that most pupils in the current Year 6 have made satisfactory progress since Year 2, and that this is accelerating through Years 5 and 6. A similar picture is apparent through Years 1 and 2. The school sets challenging targets and, in contrast to last year, indications are that the school is on track to meet them. Standards are rising steadily in English, particularly in writing. Improvement in mathematics and science is not so well marked because the recent initiatives to improve pupils' ability to use and apply their skills are not yet having an impact on standards. Planning lacks consistency and this hampers the progress made by higher-attaining pupils. School monitoring, assessment and planning documents show that children in reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 consolidate and develop their skills well because the quality of teaching is always at least good and the curriculum is well planned and interesting. Through Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory overall and the school's recently introduced tracking systems demonstrate the degree to which achievement has improved over this year, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Whilst pupils' progress has not been good enough in the past, it is now satisfactory because the teaching is consistently satisfactory or better. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress overall, as do the small number from Traveller backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. They are well behaved and enjoy their lessons. Their opinions are taken seriously. Across the school staff show great respect towards pupils and this creates a good model so that they develop respect for adults and for the achievements of their friends. They take classroom responsibilities seriously and work hard to support the smooth running of the school. Those with special responsibilities, such as the school councillors, perform their duties with care and real pride, and older pupils take great pleasure in helping their friends in Reception at playtimes. The school has clear systems to promote attendance and, as a result, it is satisfactory. Pupils are keen to master new skills and to develop a deeper understanding of the world around them. When opportunities for independent learning are planned, pupils develop confidence and, as a result, make good progress. The school is working hard to increase this aspect of its curriculum. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education that helps pupils to understand how to stay safe and maintain healthy life styles. Pupils have a good appreciation of their responsibilities to the wider community. The school makes sure that all pupils

develop a sound range of basic skills and sensible attitudes that prepare them to become valuable citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. When the headteacher was appointed in April she rightly identified the need to improve teaching as her highest priority. Teaching and learning are now monitored closely with the result that significant improvements have been made in a short period of time. These improvements are motivating pupils to want to learn. There are examples of good and, in Reception and Key Stage 1, outstanding practice and no teaching that is ineffective. In the best lessons teachers and skilled learning support assistants use questioning and discussion well to make pupils think carefully. Teachers set targets which help pupils to understand the standards that are expected and, in marking and discussion, ensure that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve. Teachers' planning is appropriately matched to the needs of lower and average-attaining pupils, and those with learning difficulties. However, activities are not consistently planned to challenge higher-attaining pupils and, as a result, they frequently fail to make sufficient progress. In a similar way, although the school is working to develop its curriculum further and there are more examples of investigative and open-ended activities, particularly in mathematics and science, this is not yet consistent which hampers the progress made by pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a broad and varied curriculum which is relevant to pupils' needs. There is a strong emphasis on teaching basic skills. Clear plans are in place to look at better ways of linking subjects together to create a more cohesive curriculum that can be taught through exploring interesting themes rather than teaching subjects in isolation. This provides a secure basis for further development, much of which is already apparent in work planned for children in the Reception and Key Stage 1 class. While the curriculum is effectively planned to match the abilities of average and lower attaining pupils, inconsistencies in assessment mean that planning for higher attaining pupils is too often lacking in challenge, particularly in science and mathematics at Key Stage 2, and this slows the progress that they are able to make. The provision for personal social and health education is satisfactory. Good plans are in place to strengthen this aspect further. The school has a good range of additional physical activities and there are suitable and well-supported, extra-curricular activities such as the lunchtime sports coaching and the parent-led 'Blue Bananas Club' during the lunch period and after school. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school works effectively to ensure children work in happy, safe and secure surroundings. There is good provision for the most socially vulnerable children and special activities help them greatly. The school has a strong commitment to supporting every child both personally and academically. Child protection procedures are firmly in place, and risk assessments are conscientiously carried out. Assessment is becoming more regularly used in setting targets and pupils are generally aware of what these are. The school has made a good beginning in using marking to help pupils know how to reach these targets, but acknowledges that practice remains inconsistent. There are helpful and effective links between the school, other relevant professionals and other local schools which extend the school's provision well. Consequently, children make great strides socially and are making sound academic improvement. Good teamwork between teachers and support staff contributes to the satisfactory rate of progress achieved by those children who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are generally satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is good because in addition to raising the standards and status of the school she has provided it with a clear sense of purpose. She has created a school environment where everyone feels cared for and appreciated. Within the constraints imposed upon such a small school, key staff are developing their roles to satisfactory effect and are having a positive impact on developments across the school. There is a tangible sense of excitement amongst all staff in describing the present and planned impact of developments. Team work and commitment of staff are strong. Because of improvements in teaching and the curriculum, standards, particularly in mathematics and science, have improved from a low point in 2005. As a result, the capacity for further improvement is good. The school has satisfactory systems for checking how well it is doing and for identifying what it could do even better. Clear assessment information is being increasingly used to track pupils' progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies introduced to secure improvement. The views of parents and other members of the school community are welcomed. All are aware of the need to continue to raise standards further, and are working hard together to provide the pupils with the best possible opportunities. The school works well in partnership with local schools and with support agencies to ensure that all pupils are given equal opportunities and are well supported in school. Governance is satisfactory. Governors were fully aware of the difficulties faced by the school over the last two years, and set clear requirements for the appointment of the headteacher. They are now kept well informed and are effectively involved in helping the school to maintain its hard won improvement. Financial management is effective and suitable care is taken to ensure that the money and resources are allocated to the areas identified as priorities. Value for money is satisfactory.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

You may remember my recent visit when I came to see you and your teachers working together. I enjoyed meeting and talking with so many of you. Thank you for all the help you gave me. I am writing to share with you what I found out about your school. I think that you go to a safe and caring school, and I really liked the way that all the staff and governors are interested in what you do and know you so well. I thought you all behave and get on very well together. I was really impressed with the very polite and grown-up way that you talked to me about your school and told me about the ways in which it has got better for you. I have asked your teachers to make sure that these improvements continue, and especially in planning work that is more challenging for some of you. You are working hard, and you told me that you like to be asked to think hard in your lessons. I have asked your teachers to work on finding new ways to help you experiment and investigate more in mathematics and science and in using the information you learn to make your lessons in other subjects even more interesting. I wish you well during your time at Ford End Primary School and for the future.