



East Stour Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118367
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280299
Inspection dates 8 March 2006 to 9 March 2006
Reporting inspector Carole Skinner AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Earlsworth Road
School category	Community		Ashford
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Kent TN24 0DW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01233 630820
Number on roll	340	Fax number	01233 632768
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Bracher
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Shears-Warren

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in a part of Ashford that has significant levels of deprivation. Many children start school with below average attainment, particularly in communication and language skills. Just under a third of the pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities, which is much higher than in most schools. The majority of pupils are White British but approximately 10% come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these only a small number are at an early stage of learning the English language. The school has an increasing roll but also experiences a high turnover of pupils. The headteacher was appointed in September 2005 and the deputy headteacher in January 2006. The school has had a number of temporary teachers in the past 18 months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the standards achieved by the pupils, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the pupils' attendance.

Although there has been a marked improvement in many aspects of the school over the past six months, its overall effectiveness is inadequate, as is the value for money it provides. Senior managers believe the school is poised to make even greater headway but have a realistic view of the extent of improvement needed. The standards achieved by pupils are too low, particularly in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). However, pupils' progress is starting to accelerate as a result of improvements in the curriculum and behaviour and attitudes to learning, which are now satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is also satisfactory, but attendance levels are below average. The satisfactory systems and procedures for ensuring pupils' care and support are continually being strengthened and enhanced. The quality of teaching and learning are inadequate because it does not fully meet the differing needs of the pupils. This is largely because of inconsistencies in the marking and assessment of pupils' work and the way teachers use the information gained to plan the next steps in learning. An exception to this is the Nursery, where children are taught well and make good progress. In the Reception classes, although children's progress is satisfactory, there are inconsistencies in teaching and assessment. The school has declined significantly in a number of respects since its last inspection. However, senior managers have created a positive vision for the school's future and have set up effective leadership teams for year groups and subjects. They have introduced more rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and sharing good practice. The school is also receiving extensive support from the local authority to assist its development and is now in a position to accelerate its rate of improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for all pupils, particularly in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT
- Improve the quality of teaching, marking and the use of assessment to ensure that all pupils are given sufficiently challenging work
- Improve the rate of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Although there are encouraging signs of improvement, achievement is inadequate and standards are significantly lower than those seen in most schools. Children start school with below average attainment, especially in language and communication skills. They make good progress in the Nursery, because of the good teaching, but this is not built

on sufficiently in Reception or the rest of the school. The results of the Year 6 national tests over the past five years have been significantly below average. In 2005, standards were exceptionally low, but better in English than in mathematics and science. Standards in ICT are also below average. Boys and girls of all abilities do not make enough progress as they move through the school. The school has identified the key factors that have contributed to the widespread underachievement of the past few years, including too many different teachers in some classes, poor behaviour and low expectations. New procedures ensure that challenging targets are being set for all pupils and their progress towards these is being checked regularly. Improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are also beginning to have a positive effect on their rate of progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They show interest in learning and most say they enjoy coming to school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They reflect on important issues in assemblies and lessons, such as the one in Year 5/6 where pupils imagined how it would feel to be a victim of bullying. Pupils learn about aspects of different cultures, such as food, dance and music. Records show that behaviour has improved significantly as a result of consistently applied rewards and sanctions. It is now satisfactory. One pupil commented, 'We've stopped play fighting because you might hurt other people even if you don't mean to'. Poor attendance by a minority of pupils has an adverse effect on their rate of progress. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and eat healthy lunches and snacks. They are beginning to have a say in important issues, such as making suggestions to overcome traffic problems near the school. The school council represents pupils' views and takes part in decision making. Some representatives even interviewed the prospective headteacher and deputy headteacher. At present, inadequate levels of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT do not prepare pupils well enough for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate because they do not enable pupils to make enough progress. Some classes have had too many different teachers in the course of a year, and there have been significant inconsistencies between classes, which are gradually being ironed out through training and support for all staff. This is already beginning to improve the rate of pupils' progress. The main weakness is that work is not matched closely enough to pupils' different abilities so that it is too easy for some and too difficult for others. Until recently, teachers' assessments of pupils' levels of attainment have been unreliable. Although this is improving as a result of training, teachers do not yet make effective use of assessment information to plan the next

steps in learning for each pupil. Marking is also inconsistent. The best gives pupils good guidance on how to improve their work but some does little more than acknowledge that work has been completed. In the best lessons, teachers manage their class well, setting time limits for each task and varying activities to maintain the pupils' interest, but this is not consistent. In less successful lessons, pupils are expected to sit for too long on the carpet listening to the teacher and they become restless and fidgety.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Until recently, weaknesses in the curriculum have been an impediment to pupils' achievement. This is because the plans for the curriculum kept track of what topics had been covered but took insufficient account of what pupils had learnt. Now, however, the curriculum enables teachers to track pupils' progress closely in each subject so that they can build on what they have learnt before. In Years 5 and 6, English, mathematics and science are now being taught in classes formed by ability. Although this arrangement is very recent, it is already beginning to have an effect on raising standards by helping to match work better to pupils' levels of attainment. The school benefits from generally good accommodation and facilities, but it does not have adequate provision for ICT. New computer equipment is currently on order to remedy this shortcoming and to extend opportunities for pupils to develop and use their ICT skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are satisfactory arrangements for providing care, guidance and support for pupils and safeguarding their welfare. First aid and minor medical matters are dealt with appropriately. There are some innovative support schemes in place for families and for pupils who need counselling and individual help with their learning. Many of the arrangements for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are quite new. They are now satisfactory, with clear strategies identified to support each pupil's learning needs. This contrasts with the previously inadequate arrangements, which contributed to the slower than expected progress made by these pupils. From Years 1 to 6, pupils are given broad targets in English and mathematics that indicate what is expected of them, but these do not give specific guidance on what pupils need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Prior to the headteacher's appointment the local authority had identified the school as giving significant cause for concern. Good leadership by the new headteacher and deputy headteacher has successfully created a positive ethos amongst staff and a shared

commitment to raising standards. They have implemented change at a sustainable pace and have effectively developed leadership skills amongst other staff. They have a very accurate picture of what needs to be done and how much progress the school has made, although the formal self-evaluation graded the school's effectiveness as satisfactory. Recently appointed year group leaders are helping to achieve greater consistency between classes in curricular planning and teaching. Subject leaders are becoming increasingly effective in identifying areas for improvement through monitoring pupils' work. Governors form a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through asking challenging questions and examining performance data. The views of parents and pupils are also taken into account when deciding priorities for improvement. Senior managers are providing more rigorous monitoring of teaching and opportunities for sharing good practice. Senior managers have already had a significant impact on improving the curriculum, pupils' behaviour and their personal development. More effective financial management has tackled many of the shortages in resources that were hindering pupils' progress. Recent initiatives have begun to take effect although managers are realistic about the timescale required to address the school's shortcomings. However, much of the groundwork has now been done to enable the school to progress at a faster rate during the next 12 months.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	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	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	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	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	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	2	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	4	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

Dear Pupils, Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. Here are some of the things that we liked most:

- Children in the Nursery get off to a good start because the teaching is good
- Your teachers and parents told us how much your behaviour had improved recently. We agree and can see that this is helping you to work harder in lessons
- We like the way the school council helps you to become involved in making decisions about the school
- Your new headteacher is working very hard to improve lots of things about your school. The other teachers are working with her to find ways to help you make better progress. These are some of the things we have asked your school to do to get even better:

- We think you need to reach higher standards in your work, especially in literacy, numeracy and ICT
- In order to help you, we have asked your teachers to make sure they check carefully on how well you are doing, show you how to do even better and give you work that you will find challenging but not too hard
- A few of you do not come to school as regularly as you should and this is stopping you from making enough progress. We have asked the school to work with you and your families to help you attend more often. We are sure that you will work with your teachers to help your school to keep on improving.

With best wishes,
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