



# Ulcombe Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118631  
**LEA** Kent  
**Inspection number** 280361  
**Inspection dates** 22 November 2005 to 22 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Helen Hutchings RISP

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	The Street
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Ulcombe
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		Maidstone, Kent ME17 1DU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 842903
<b>Number on roll</b>	76	<b>Fax number</b>	01622 840163
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Terry Shortland
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 May 1998	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Dodge

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 November 2005 - 22 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 280361
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School is a small school serving the local community. The numbers in each year group are small and pupils are taught in mixed age classes. Currently there are no Year 6 pupils. There are similar numbers of boys and girls in the school but this varies significantly from year to year. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with about one in six pupils from a Traveller background. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is similar to the national average and this year, no pupils hold a statement of special educational need. When the school was last inspected in February 2004, it was identified as having serious weaknesses, mainly in the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and higher ability pupils. At that time the school provided unsatisfactory value for money.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School makes good provision for pupils' academic and personal development and the school's overall effectiveness is now satisfactory. Provision is considerably better than at the time of the last inspection and is beginning to have an impact on standards in mathematics and reading, although it has not yet brought about the expected improvement in writing. Facilities for pupils to use information and communication technology have improved and the school recognises that this requires further development. The school has a good capacity and determination to improve, already demonstrated by stabilised standards and improved achievement of all groups of pupils since the last inspection. Parents have confidence in the school. Pupils say they feel supported and listened to well.

Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. This informs the school's development priorities effectively. The headteacher has focused the staff team on addressing the issues identified in the last inspection report, particularly on raising achievement and the introduction of effective systems to monitor pupils' progress. This information is used to plan pupils' next steps and additional group work for targeted pupils. When this happens, most pupils make good progress. The breadth of the curriculum, quality of teaching and the care and guidance for pupils have all improved over the last two years and are now good. Children in the Reception class develop a sound basis for later learning. Pupils across the school have positive attitudes and enjoy their lessons. They have a good awareness of the quality of their work and what they have to do to improve. Their behaviour is good and they help one another.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

To continue its drive for improvement, the school has identified the following areas as the most important and inspectors agree with these priorities: • improve the standard of pupils' writing • implement the planned increase in the use of information and communication technology.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Since the school was last inspected, standards have improved in most areas and pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. Children enter the school in the Reception class with a wide range of experiences but generally lower levels of skills than those normally found in children of their age, particularly the communication skills of some pupils. They make satisfactory progress during their time in the school. Results in the tests taken at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2005 were in line with national averages overall, but in Year 2, performance in writing was slightly below the national average. In Year 6, fewer pupils reached the national average in English than in mathematics and science.

The data held by the school shows that pupils are currently making at least the rate of progress expected nationally. This follows a few years when progress was variable, with some pupils making different amounts of progress from year to year. Current achievement levels are the result of consistent teaching across the school, which gives pupils challenging tasks and addresses gaps in pupils' previous learning.

The school sets challenging targets for pupils' performance and in 2005 achieved or exceeded these, apart from in English in Year 6. Progress is monitored closely and action taken if any pupil is seen to be underperforming against his or her targets. No specific group of pupils underachieves in relation to another, although some individuals who have been identified as having learning difficulties progress at a slower rate than others.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development is good. Pupils' good attitudes, behaviour and relationships contribute to the harmonious community. Older pupils show maturity and self-confidence. The school council has a strong voice in school development and helps pupils to learn important skills for living in a democratic society. They appreciate their ideas being put into practice. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and the school has plans to develop it further. Attendance is close to the national average.

Pupils take an active part in community events and are well prepared for their role as citizens. They develop good attitudes and skills for learning that will contribute to their future well-being. They are well aware of how to keep healthy and participate voluntarily in the many sporting activities provided by the school. Many pupils take a lead in organising events to support charities of their choice.

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory and is fostered through worship and reflection. Social development is enhanced by visits, visitors and community links. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They develop their awareness of differences in culture and belief, for example through raising money to build a school in Malawi. Pupils from Traveller backgrounds are integrated well and their cultural traditions are respected.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved since the last inspection. There are well-established routines that help pupils to settle quickly and attentively to their work. Teachers build well on what pupils know and can do. Most teaching is lively and matched well to pupils' needs. Pupils respond with enjoyment to the challenge of each lesson, although some said that they could do more in the time available.

Learning support assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils from the Traveller community.

Improved assessment procedures and tracking of pupils' progress have led to improvements in learning. Pupils' work is marked well and this helps them to understand what they are doing, how well they have done and how they can improve. Good links with a neighbouring secondary school enhance pupils' learning, develop their life skills and prepare them for future learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum deficiencies identified at the last inspection have been addressed well. It is now good, meets statutory requirements and is enhanced by some specialist teaching in art and music, and French for older pupils. Additional provision is outstanding, with opportunities for all pupils to benefit from a wide range of extra activities, such as school clubs, residential visits, day visits and visitors. Special events, such as curriculum days, multi-sensory experiences, reading initiatives and projects with the Traveller Support Service extend pupils' knowledge and skills. For example, a visit from a theatre group led to recycling and composting initiatives within the school. Staff have developed good links across the curriculum, enabling pupils to use and develop their literacy, numeracy and computer skills in other subjects. The school recognises that the use of information and communication technology requires further development and has good structures in place to achieve this. Enrichment activities and extended services, such as the drama link bought in by the school, contribute well to pupils' enjoyment and achievement.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. The high level of care and support makes a good contribution to pupils' progress, well-being and enjoyment of learning. Pupils feel safe and know whom they can approach if a problem arises. Pupils' emotional well-being is effectively developed through creative and sensory activities. The arrangements for child protection are good. Governors regularly monitor health and safety.

The arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress, developed since the last inspection, mean that their progress is assessed regularly and individual targets set. Pupils find their 'Pupil Passports' helpful in knowing what they have to do next. Older pupils meet with other pupils from local schools to participate in a 'Learning Styles' initiative which is helping them to understand how they learn most effectively. Drugs and sex education is planned progressively throughout the curriculum. The sex education curriculum is currently being revised. Older pupils work together to solve real-life problems related to safety, drugs education and health issues. They work with pupils from other schools to raise awareness of issues such as bullying. The joint activities with other schools also help pupils prepare for transition to secondary school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good at all levels in the school. Many staff are relatively new to their responsibilities but have a good awareness of their roles and of what needs to be done to bring about further improvements. The headteacher's strong leadership has successfully created a stable environment, following the period of disruption reported at the previous inspection. Parents comment favourably on the happy and vibrant environment and how their children enjoy going to school. The headteacher has relentlessly developed systems in the school to ensure that performance is monitored and action taken when weaknesses are identified. Regular monitoring of lessons provides good information on the quality of teaching and learning and is used to improve provision further. The school has used the external support provided by the local education authority and other schools in a local 'cluster' well to improve its practices. There has not yet been time to evaluate the success of all of the initiatives but those introduced first, such as a focus on mathematics, are having a measurable, positive impact. Teamwork is strong and focused effectively on those developments designed to have the greatest impact on pupils' achievements.

The governing body ably fulfils its responsibilities. Governors know the school well and have not shied away from taking difficult strategic decisions to ensure the future of the school, including reducing the number of classes to achieve financial viability. This has been done whilst retaining the confidence of parents. The school's finances are managed carefully and value for money is satisfactory.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	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	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School The Street Ulcombe Maidstone Kent ME17 1DU

23 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you for all the help you gave Dr Lowe and me when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed listening to you. This helped us to find out a lot about the school and we want to let you know what we thought about it.

We are pleased that there are many good things happening in the school:

- you behave well and this helps to make the school a happy place
- you have interesting things to do in lessons. Your attitudes to work are good and you work hard, although some of you said that you could work even harder
- your work is marked well to help you understand your targets and what you have to do to improve
- you know that there is someone to talk to if you have a problem and you get good help to keep you safe
- you are lucky to have so many clubs and visits and we are pleased that you attend so many of these
- the school council helps teachers to know what you think about the school.

The school has planned some things to help you to make your work better and we hope that you will also concentrate on these:

- your writing is not as good as your reading, mathematics and science. Make sure that you work really hard on improving your writing when teachers give you new things to do
- your teachers will be giving you even more chances to use a wider range of computer software to help you learn.

Yours sincerely

Mrs H Hutchings Lead inspector