



Phoenix Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133961
LEA Kent
Inspection number 282399
Inspection dates 7 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bybrook Road
School category	Community		Kennington
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Ashford, Kent TN24 9JD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01233 622510
Number on roll	210	Fax number	01233 664462
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Paul Britton
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Miss Kate Harper

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Phoenix Community Primary School opened in September 2003. It replaced an infant school, identified as requiring special measures by an Ofsted inspection in 2002, and a junior school, identified as underperforming by the local authority. The school is of average size. Most pupils are White British and few speak English as an additional language. The proportions eligible for a free school meal and with learning difficulties and disabilities are above average. A very high proportion of the pupils join or leave during each academic year. The school's two existing buildings occupy different ends of the same site.

The school's substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher left at the end of the 2005 academic year. The headteacher was replaced for a term by a local authority advisory headteacher and then by the current acting headteacher. A permanent replacement has been appointed for September and the advisory headteacher is to provide support up to that point. The school has an acting deputy headteacher and no replacement has yet been appointed. Staff turnover in the last two years has been high but is now more settled.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence supports the school's judgement that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. It is an improving school, offering satisfactory value for money.

Children make a good start in the Reception Year. The quality of provision is good and they make good progress. Their attainment is well below average on entry and remains below average by the end of the year. Between Years 1 and 6, the pupils' progress is satisfactory overall, although it is improving. However, the legacy of gaps in their knowledge and understanding, particularly for the older pupils, means that standards are below the national average by the time they leave.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy school, although attendance is too low. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are a strength. Vulnerable pupils are effectively identified and well provided for.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features. However, the good practice that exists is not consistent across all classes, leading to uneven progress by pupils over time. The pupils receive accurate guidance on how to improve but are not involved enough in setting their own targets. The curriculum is satisfactory, and includes a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Accurate monitoring at senior level gives a clear overall direction for improvement. The quality of middle management is varied. Although there is some good practice, too little attention is paid to analysing data on pupils' achievement in order to set development priorities and measure their impact. Governors support the school well, gathering a good range of evidence, although they too do not always refer enough to achievement data when monitoring its progress.

The school has made good progress since opening. However, its capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. While the appointment of a substantive headteacher has added stability, this is off-set by the lack of a substantive deputy headteacher and inconsistencies in middle management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards, particularly in Years 1 to 6, through improving teaching further.
- Continue to work with parents and carers to improve attendance levels.
- Involve pupils more in setting their own targets so they know how to improve.
- Ensure all senior posts are suitably filled by staff able to maintain the school's improvement.
- Develop the ability of middle managers to analyse pupil achievement in order to set development priorities and measure the impact made.
- Ensure the governors consistently measure the school's progress by the impact made on pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average overall and are improving. Children's attainment on entry to the Reception Year is well below average. They make good overall progress in their first year, doing particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development. There are relative weaknesses in communication, language and literacy, for example, in writing. The children's attainment is below average by the end of the Reception Year.

In Years 1 and 2, the pupils' progress is satisfactory and improving. They are beginning to achieve well based on their starting points, although standards in reading, writing and mathematics continue to be below average by the end of Year 2. Between Years 3 and 6, the picture is similar, with pupils' progress improving overall and especially so in mathematics and English, where the majority meet appropriately challenging targets. Nevertheless, it is inconsistent between different year groups and the pupils are hindered by a legacy of gaps in knowledge and understanding due to weaknesses in past teaching. The standards achieved by the pupils currently in Year 6 are below, but approaching, those expected nationally in mathematics, English and science.

The pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language make good progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they have a positive effect on their learning. The majority are mature and responsible individuals by the time they leave. Most have good attitudes to learning and enjoy school, although attendance is below the national average. Their behaviour is good in lessons and at break and lunch times. The pupils say there is no bullying and that they feel 'really-really' safe at school. They know who they should approach about any problems. The pupils' moral and social development is good. They are supportive toward each other and relationships with teachers are good. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, with scope to improve their understanding of the multi-cultural nature of our society. They are well aware of the need to eat well and take regular exercise; participation in clubs and sports activities is enthusiastic. The pupils contribute well to the school and its local community. A good number play active roles in the school council or take on additional responsibilities, for example, acting as telephonists in reception. These, alongside involvement in charity fundraising events such as disco dancing and sponsored walks, give pupils a good understanding of wider economic and social issues.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Teachers are gaining confidence; they manage pupils' behaviour well and are beginning to employ a variety of tasks to help pupils learn in different ways. They make satisfactory use of assessment data to plan learning which matches pupils' needs. However, not all teachers understand well enough how to link their planning to National Curriculum requirements. In most lessons, the pupils know what they are learning and why. In some lessons the pace of work is too slow because clear time limits are not set and, when working in small groups, the pupils' progress is not always monitored well enough. Most, but not all, marking provides clear guidance on how to improve. The pupils are increasingly involved in measuring their progress towards class targets. Nevertheless, they are not involved enough in setting their own individual targets or aware enough of targets in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Support for pupils with additional learning needs is good overall. It is satisfactory for gifted and talented pupils. It is good for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language. Additional adults are deployed well to support these pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets National Curriculum requirements and offers an interesting range of activities. Since the school opened, suitable emphasis has been placed on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics. Appropriate time is given to other subjects but, with the strong emphasis on English and mathematics, the school is aware that other curriculum areas are not contributing as much as they might to pupils' learning. Some interesting thematic links between subjects are made in curriculum plans; however, the depth of this planning is variable. Provision for science is satisfactory but underdeveloped when compared with that in mathematics and English. Information and communication technology is not consistently used by pupils to extend their learning and skills.

Effective use is made of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' learning. The school offers a wide range of clubs and activities, emphasising health to support pupils in leading healthy lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides pupils with good care and guidance and has a very positive ethos. Communications with parents and carers are good and they find the school easy to approach. Support for the pupils' personal development is particularly strong.

Vulnerable pupils, including those at risk of underachieving or who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour, are effectively identified and monitored. The learning mentor and the family liaison officer make a significant contribution in this area. Barriers to learning are diagnosed well and individual and group support given to help the targeted pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves and, where attendance and punctuality are a concern, there is evidence of a positive impact being made on individual pupils. The school is making good efforts to tackle its lower-than-average attendance figures. There is good liaison with secondary schools to help pupils make a positive start in Year 7. Child protection procedures are secure, as are those to ensure pupils' health and safety.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school makes good links with other agencies and offers a learning environment which seeks to include all pupils. The acting headteacher, supported by the advisory headteacher, plays a central role in whole-school development. Effective monitoring and evaluation at senior level yield a good understanding of strengths and priorities for improvement. The majority of these priorities are rightly focused on raising standards. However, the quality of evaluation and planning by middle managers, for example, subject leaders, although improving, is inconsistent. Overall, they know too little about the quality of teaching in their subject areas or about how to analyse the pupils' achievement in order to define strengths and weaknesses. The school works effectively to support its staff at all levels and to lessen the impact of the high turnover of teachers. The school's split accommodation, while satisfactory, hampers easy communication between the two sites. A new-build project is planned and this is welcome. The outside play area for the Reception class is uninviting. The school's finances are well managed and resources for learning are satisfactory.

The governors are very committed to the school. They gather a wide range of evidence to monitor its progress. Their understanding of how to use assessment data to hold the school to account is developing well but is not comprehensive. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school's work and their views are appropriately gathered and taken into account.

The school has made good progress since it opened and standards have risen when compared with the two predecessor schools. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. The appointment of a substantive headteacher has added a measure of stability, but the lack of a substantive deputy headteacher and inconsistencies in middle management have an adverse effect on overall leadership and management.

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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?	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	2	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	3	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	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

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?	2	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	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	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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we came to visit you recently. Many of you took the time to talk to us and this helped us to understand about what life is like in your school. This letter is to tell you what we found out.

We were impressed by the sensible way you behaved around the school and in lessons. You told us that you feel safe and well cared for at the school and that, if you do have any problems, there are adults you can talk to who will help. You also told us that the lessons are usually interesting and that you like the clubs and activities the school provides. Most of you enjoy coming to school, although there are some of you who don't come as often as you should.

The headteacher and the other teachers work hard to improve the school. You are making the amount of progress with your work that we would expect to see and some of you are beginning to do even better. Your teachers give you the right kind of support in lessons. They are keen to help you but they know that not all of the lessons you get are equally good. Most of you know what to do to improve your work because your teachers tell you. However, not all of you understand why these things will make your work better.

There are some areas in which the school can improve

carry on helping you improve the standards you reach in your work by making sure all lessons are as good as the best ones

support all of you in coming to school as often as possible and for you to try and do this as well

get you more involved in deciding how to improve your work

make sure there are enough senior teachers to continue improving the school in the future

decide which kinds of work you find hardest so that you can be given more support in these areas rather than in the work you find easier

think carefully about where the work to improve the school is making the most difference and where improvements are still needed.

Best wishes, Stephen Long HMI, Lead inspector