



Frant Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114505
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 289943
Inspection date 18 October 2006
Reporting inspector David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	High Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Frant
Age range of pupils	4-11		Tunbridge Wells TN3 9DT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01892 750243
Number on roll (school)	110	Fax number	01892 750 243
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vacant Position
		Headteacher	Paul Shefford
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This primary school serves the village of Frant and is smaller than average. The number of pupils has risen considerably in the last six years. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average.

The accommodation is extremely cramped and lacks a dedicated school hall or dining room. The Reception class and computer suite are not purpose built, and are based in two rooms of an adjacent house. Two teachers job-share in each of the four mixed-age classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective school providing a good quality of education despite the severe limitations of the buildings. The combination of good academic and personal standards has come about through consistently good teaching in a well led and managed environment. This is a view shared by the overwhelming majority of parents.

Children enter the school with skills and experiences generally above those expected for their age and make good progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception Year a significant number are working at the levels expected of pupils in Year 1. By Years 2 and 6, standards are above average. The 2006 national test results for 7 and 11 year olds were above average. Nearly all pupils attained at least the expected levels, and almost a half attained higher levels than this in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils make sustained progress as they move through the school and achieve well and sometimes very well. In other subjects progress, although good, is limited by the lack of more practical, investigative and experimental activities because it is difficult to provide these within the restricted accommodation.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils are cared for and supported well so pupils rise to the challenges they are given. Their behaviour is exemplary and they thoroughly enjoy school. They are keen participants in the lively discussions during lessons and take personal responsibility very seriously. For instance, the older pupils monitor year groups coming back into school through the narrow corridors. Teachers encourage all pupils to be responsible for their own learning, a valuable life skill in preparation for when they are older.

The good leadership and management have developed effective systems to help alleviate the many unusual problems faced by the school. As highlighted in the last two inspection reports and summed up by one parent, 'The cramped conditions hamper the educational and social development of the children. The school juggles things very well but it is asking a lot of them.' These frustrations were evident during the inspection. A group of pupils walked to the village hall for their physical education lesson, taking an hour and a quarter for what should have been a 40-minute lesson. The satisfactory curriculum covers all the required elements but lacks vibrancy because of the inevitable time constraints. As the headteacher quite rightly remarked, 'We could do so much more. It begs the question about how much more effective we could be if we had the right facilities.'

Improvement planning, criticised in the last report, is now well established and looks realistically towards the future. The five year plan is one of 'review and revise'. Its formulation involves all the staff and it is regularly shared with the parents on the school's website. Its one shortcoming is that there has been no analysis of the impact of the time used on individual activities, particularly those outside the school such as swimming, and whether the time is used as wisely as it could be.

The school does well given its difficult circumstances. The good standards of pupils as well as the provision they are offered are continuing to improve and developments

planned for the future indicate that there is good capacity for the school's effectiveness to rise.

What the school should do to improve further

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum to ensure that it is more exciting and stimulating to enable pupils to make the best possible progress in all subjects.
- Eliminate the shortcomings in the accommodation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and all pupils achieve well. There are no significant differences between different groups, including pupils with learning difficulties. Children start well in the Reception class. Their ability on entry is variable but higher proportions of pupils than usual have strong social and communication skills. The good progress they make is due to the teachers' efforts to balance formal activities such as reading and writing with allowing children to develop their own knowledge and understanding through play.

Elsewhere, pupils achieve good basic skills particularly in their use of language and vocabulary. The newly developed computer suite, as well as the use of laptops, is adding a new dimension and enabling pupils to undertake research and experimentation in preparation for their future economic well-being. In other subjects, such as history, pupils have good factual knowledge but given the ability levels evident in English, mathematics and science they are not always able to use this information independently to develop better understanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As one parent put it, 'The children possess a unique and caring attitude and socialise very well across all years.' Their excellent behaviour and enjoyment of school is characterised by the good attendance and high levels of participation in extra-curricular activities. Their positive contribution to the community, in knowing how to keep safe and adopting a healthy lifestyle, through initiatives such as the pupils' involvement in the 'Healthy Schools' award, have also led to discussions about local and international environmental issues. Children are developing a satisfactory understanding of other cultures through their work supporting those less fortunate than themselves and through the study of other religions. Much of this work is based on teaching factual knowledge and more opportunities could be offered to extend pupils' understanding through practical activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is consistently good in all classes, with some that is outstanding. The teaching in every class is shared between two teachers who plan together well. In this way their individual strengths are utilised to the full. Teaching assistants are used particularly well and the work they do with groups is of good quality. Pupils are expected to work hard and always do their best and the teaching activities are designed to develop these attributes. When working on their own, concentration levels are high and the background chatter is nearly always concerned with the tasks pupils have been set.

The challenging targets set by the school for English and mathematics have been met because the teachers' assessments are based on good information. In other subjects, teachers have made great efforts to ensure that all elements of the curriculum are covered by developing some innovative local links. However, there are fewer examples of pupils being able to investigate at first hand, as in history, geography or art.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum covers all the required areas, including religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship. The teaching of French and Spanish has recently been introduced. Teachers plan links between different subjects satisfactorily to ensure that the learning of specific subject skills is moved on from year to year. However, because of the many restraints imposed by the poor accommodation the school has difficulty in providing an even richer level of study. For instance, the small computer suite can only accommodate half a class, which makes timetabling difficult. In addition, one of the Key Stage 2 classes has to stop earlier than normal each day so that the room can be rearranged for assembly. The Reception class cannot easily organise permanent role-play areas because everything has to be cleared away for lunches. Any use of the school field is restricted, as it is a 15 minute walk away.

The school provides a suitably wide range of extra-curricular activities. For instance, the oversubscribed gardening club is presently planning what they will grow next year in the local vicar's garden with the help of his wife. While this provides good local links, it is another example of the difficulties of the provision as there are no useful areas within the school grounds. The pupils are generally happy with what they are expected to learn and make good progress. However, some say that they wish all of it could be done within school rather than having to keep travelling to other places.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are looked after well and are greatly supported in both their academic and personal development. Procedures to keep them safe are thorough, particularly given that some classes are in adjacent buildings and there is a lot of movement between them. Academic assessments are carried out with rigour and analysed closely. Anomalies are then investigated to establish whether they are teaching issues or related to individual pupils. In this way, pupils are guided from an early stage and so make the progress that they should. The school is presently reviewing its procedures as some are not sufficiently formalised to ensure that they are applied consistently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management, including that of the governing body, are good. The school's self-evaluation procedures are leading to a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The relaxed but efficient management style of the headteacher, ably supported by the small senior management team, strikes the right balance between driving forward improvements and ensuring that all those involved with the school are consulted and their views valued. The governors in particular have provided good levels of challenge and support. Innovative plans have ensured that the job-sharing arrangements, building restrictions and national initiatives can be dealt with effectively. As yet there has been no analysis of how these innovations have affected provision and whether this is restricting the development of a more exciting, vibrant and stimulating curriculum. Finances have been prudently managed by the governors and have provided a small buffer should the numbers of pupils fluctuate. As a result, staffing levels are good.

Despite the many shortcomings imposed by the buildings, the overall success of the school is visible in the continually rising achievement of pupils, the support of the majority of parents and in the way that a culture of excellence is being engendered.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for looking after me so well during my recent visit. I very much enjoyed joining you in lessons and your assembly. As I promised, I would like to share some of the findings about your school.

- You told me how very much you enjoyed being at Frant and how proud you are of your school. I can see why. You are extremely well behaved, get on well with your work and join in all the things that you are offered.
- You make good progress in each year and do well by the end of Year 6. Some older children told me that you expected to do well in your tests. I think you will, as you have a lot to live up to.
- You told me that you are taught well and I agree. All your teachers work very hard to make sure that they plan activities that will interest you. I have asked them to look at their planning to make sure that you are given some more opportunities to make each subject even more exciting.
- You are looked after very well. The 'Being Polite' scheme you have running at the moment has helped you all understand how important it is to get on with each other. I hope you reach your 10,000 bead target so that you are able to get your prize.
- You probably do not need me to tell you that your school is very cramped and I could see the difficulties you have in trying to do things like PE and games. I have asked that, because of these difficulties, your teachers check that all the activities you do make good use of time.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors are trying hard to improve your school and with the help of all of you I am sure they will be able to.

Finally, I wish you all the best for the future and thank you once again.