



# Ightham Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118293  
**Local Authority** Kent  
**Inspection number** 291079  
**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Kevin Hodge

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

|   |                    |                         |                    |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary            | <b>School address</b>   | Oldbury Lane       |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community          |                         | Ightham            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11               |                         | Sevenoaks TN15 9DD |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b> | 01732 882405       |
| <b>Number on roll (school)</b>            | 172                | <b>Fax number</b>       | 01732 781027       |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body | <b>Chair</b>            | Tina Higgins       |
|   |                    | <b>Headteacher</b>      | June Cooke         |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 12 March 2001      |                         |                    |

|                          |   |                                    |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller-sized school than average. There is a wide social mix among pupils, but the majority come from favourable backgrounds. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. Children enter the school with levels of abilities that are typical, but are higher in their social and language development. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The current headteacher, along with two teachers, started in the school at the beginning of this academic year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Ightham Primary School's effectiveness is satisfactory and clearly improving. The new headteacher, supported well by senior staff, is enabling the school to tackle a legacy of some underachievement and to improve the quality of education for all pupils. Clearer ways of keeping an eye on pupils' progress are helping to spot those who need that extra push. This has ensured pupils are making better progress, and standards are rising in Years 3 to 6. They are now average and there are good signs that they will rise further.

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), achieve satisfactorily. The improving progress of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is beginning to match the good progress made by classmates in other year groups. Progress in science, however, is still too slow. Good teaching combined with an exciting range of activities gets children off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, enabling them to reach expected standards. Good teaching in Years 1 and 2 builds on this good start and pupils reach above-average standards. Teaching is more typically satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 because not all pupils are sufficiently challenged at times. There is more innovative teaching taking place, but not consistently across all year groups. In science, for example, activities lack sparkle to ensure that pupils' achievements are more rapid. The curriculum is satisfactory, but some important improvements are still in the process of being developed. There is a good range of activities to enrich class work. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory.

The school is good at promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. This results in pupils who enjoy school, behave very well and are courteous and cooperative. The good care, guidance and support pupils receive ensure that they feel safe and are able to approach staff if troubled. Their academic guidance is a weaker aspect as not all pupils have a clear idea of their newly developed targets for improvement. Close links with parents, most of whom express very positive views, are reflected in comments about the school's 'happy atmosphere' and pupils' 'good all-round education'. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Senior staff set a determined but realistic approach to improving the school, and the aspirations of staff, governors and pupils are being raised to achieve it. Their willingness to evaluate what they are doing and adopt new ways of working indicates there is sound capacity to improve, but several initiatives are at an early stage of development.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement in science in Years 3 to 6 so pupils develop higher levels of knowledge and investigative skills.
- Improve the consistency of teaching in Years 3 to 6 so all pupils are challenged more effectively in their learning.
- Improve the use of target setting so that pupils have a clearer understanding of their next steps in learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points, which are broadly average. Their progress is good in the Foundation stage and in Years 1 and 2, but in the recent past, pupils have not achieved well enough in Years 3 to 6, particularly in mathematics and science. An improving curriculum, more stable staffing and a closer eye being kept on pupils' progress are all improving their achievement to a satisfactory level, except in science, where progress is still too slow. In the Foundation Stage, children have a good start to school. All reach, and a significant minority exceed, the targets set for them. Standards in Year 2 are above average. By Year 6, they are now broadly average. The school's more accurate assessment, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that pupils' attainment is set to rise and is likely to meet the challenging targets set for them. Pupils now achieve satisfactorily in ICT, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with LDD achieve in line with classmates, because of the well-focused help they receive. The few pupils with English as an additional language achieve well because the extra support they receive is good.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils behave very well in and around the school and their attitudes and relationships are good. The good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development results in them cooperating very well and respecting each other. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance and punctuality are good. A recent 'multicultural week' enhanced pupils' awareness of other faiths and cultures satisfactorily. The active school council enjoy making a positive contribution to school life, such as helping to develop the school's aims and in having a say on staff appointments. Pupils understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and what is best for them to eat. Many exercise regularly at playtimes and by using the after-school sports clubs. The many fundraising activities, such as Year 6 organising a tea party for elderly residents, successfully develop pupils' social awareness and mean their links with the local community are good. Some past underachievement in gaining basic skills hampers their preparation for their next phase of education, but they work well independently and with others. This helps prepare them well for their long-term future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching is typically good in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Pupils learn well as a result of the good range of activities and 'hands on' approach adopted. Teaching is more typically satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 as there is more variation in the quality of teaching. Not all teachers set a good pace to learning, and activities in some

subjects are not as stimulating or practically challenging. The good use of interactive whiteboards throughout the school to enhance pupils' learning, though, is a strong feature. All teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and of their attitudes to work. Pupils respond very well and show an ability to work sensibly together and listen carefully. Teaching assistants provide good additional support, especially for pupils with LDD. The needs of other groups of pupils, particularly the small number of pupils with English as an additional language or who transfer from other schools, are met well. Teachers' day-to-day marking is satisfactory, but varies in quality. The best gives clear guidance to pupils about how to improve their work as well as noting their success.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

Recent reviews in planning to reflect changes in class organisation are beginning to improve pupils' progress. This is more secure in English and mathematics. In science, changes to improve schemes of work are not yet completed, which means some activities do not always capitalise on previous learning or are as exciting as they could be. In the Foundation stage, topics chosen are exciting and relevant. A good mix between children choosing between activities and being directed enhances their personal and academic development well. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are systematically planned for throughout the school. These skills, along with those in ICT, are used appropriately, rather than extensively, in other subjects such as history and science. There is good provision for pupils' personal development and pupils' learning is also enriched by a suitable range of educational visits and clubs covering music and sports. A range of interesting visitors and special 'enrichment weeks' help boost pupils' curiosity and broaden their outlook.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are well cared for and they are taught well about the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and staying safe. There are effective child protection procedures in place. Regular risk assessments ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff have a good knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs and, as a result, pupils report that they feel safe and able to confide in any adult if needed. The support of pupils with LDD is good and effective links with parents, carers and support agencies ensure their needs are well understood and addressed. Pupils get a smooth start to their education as links with the adjacent nursery are good. Parents are pleased with this. As one said, 'The safe, secure environment helps them to shine'. The school has started to use targets to help guide pupils' learning and this is most effective in their English work. However, although most pupils know they have targets, older pupils, particularly, are not always clear what these are and how they can use them to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The new headteacher and senior staff acted quickly to tackle the weaknesses identified in some pupils' achievement and in subject leadership. As a result, these are improving. Better assessment is pinpointing pupils' progress more accurately, for example. Good strides have been made since the last inspection to improve ICT. Realistic self-evaluation procedures are helping staff and governors to target further improvement, but some areas are still under review. For example, checks on teaching are regular, but have covered a narrow focus whilst the new headteacher has gained an overview of the planning for teaching and learning. These checks now need to clearly identify the elements to improve pupil's learning to the next level. Governors give the school satisfactory support and their informal links with school are well developed. They have been particularly active in promoting better facilities such the new hard surface sports court. Governors continue to have established links with classes and overviews of specific areas such as health and safety and for particular groups of pupils. The recent change to the way they link to curriculum subject leaders shows promise, but has only just started. Their increased focus on the school's performance is enabling them to be a helpful 'critical friend' and increase the school's capacity to improve.

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## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### 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   |
| 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  | 3   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 3   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 3 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   |
| 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   | 3   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 3   |
| 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  | 3   |
| 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

I'm writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. We really enjoyed visiting you. We consider Ightham to be a satisfactory school that is improving quickly. Your parents and carers agree with us that Ightham is a caring and welcoming place.

Here are some of the 'highlights'.

- You are working hard to make the school even better.
- You said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you do.
- You make satisfactory progress in your work and reach the expected standards by the time you leave.
- Children in the Reception class learn well and have lots of fun.
- Teaching is a bit mixed. Sometimes its good, but sometimes it lacks sparkle.
- Class activities are planned satisfactorily and your 'special' activity weeks help make learning more exciting.
- You all behave really well and the school helps you become very mature and sensible.
- Your involvement with local events and the community is good.
- The new headteacher, staff and governors work well together to find out what needs doing next to help your school get even better.

I have asked the school to look at these things to improve:

- To help you improve your science knowledge and ability to do experiments confidently.
- Make sure all lessons are taught really well, particularly for the older pupils. You do help your teachers by working hard in lessons.
- Help you know your own targets better so you will know what to improve and can see when you have got better.