



Offham Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118308
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291086
Inspection dates 8–9 March 2007
Reporting inspector Melvyn Hemmings

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Road
School category	Community		Offham
Age range of pupils	4–11		West Malling ME19 5NX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 842355
Number on roll (school)	211	Fax number	01732 875133
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Martyn Begby
		Headteacher	Gwyn Webster
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The attainment of most pupils on entry is above that expected. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. There has been a high turnover of staff in the last two years owing to maternity leaves.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Offham Primary is a good school with outstanding features. Parents are very supportive of the school and one parental comment captures the views of many, 'We are pleased with Offham Primary as it has the values we believe in; respect, kindness, and it is well managed and at the same time learning is fun, clear and disciplined.' Parents are right to have confidence in the work of the school as it enables pupils to make good progress and reach high standards, particularly in English and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6. Central to the success of the school is good leadership and management. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher a robust team ethos has been created, with all staff firmly committed to helping pupils to achieve as well as they can. Each pupil is seen as unique and his or her individual needs are effectively met. As a result, pupils thrive within an exciting and stimulating learning environment.

Children in the Reception class make good progress across all the areas of learning and by the time they enter Year 1 have achieved beyond the levels expected for their age. Through the rest of the school this good progress is maintained. Standards in writing are exceptionally high with a high proportion of pupils reaching above average standards. Achievement in science is not as strong, with pupils making satisfactory progress and attaining standards that are just above average. This is because there has been insufficient emphasis on promoting pupils' scientific investigative skills and so these are not developed as well as they could be.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils' excellent attitudes and their enjoyment of school, reflected in their good attendance, are evident in their enthusiastic approach to learning. Relationships and behaviour are exemplary and pupils find it easy to cooperate in pairs and small groups, as well as work independently. The strong support and interest of parents and carers make a significant contribution to pupils' very positive attitudes to their lives and learning at school. Pupils' contribution to the local community is very strong and very much appreciated by village residents. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are good and have a positive impact on the good progress pupils make. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. They work effectively with skilful teaching assistants to support individuals to improve their work, particularly those who find learning difficult. Within the curriculum, provision for literacy and numeracy is strong and there are outstanding enrichment activities provided to extend learning. Care, support and guidance of pupils are good. As a result, pupils feel safe, secure and very well cared for and say that adults will listen to any concerns they might have. As one said, 'If something did happen teachers would do something about it'. Parents are very pleased with the way their children are looked after while in school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Boost pupils' investigational skills to raise achievement and standards in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children have a good start to their education in the Reception class, which enables them to make good progress. As a result, they reach levels above those expected in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Activities are carefully planned to develop their learning in a practical and enjoyable manner. Achievement through the rest of the school is good, enabling pupils to reach high standards in English and mathematics. Standards are exceptionally high in writing because of the many opportunities for pupils to extend their basic skills by writing at length in English and other subjects. Progress in science is slower because pupils have not been given sufficient opportunities to develop their investigative skills. Achievement and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection and are now good because pupils are encouraged to practise and refine their skills in other subjects, such as by researching the Internet for information in history and geography lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children in the Reception class are confident and show good self-esteem. They work and play happily together, make choices about what they might do and work independently of adults. As they move up through the school, pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities, such as being a member of the school council. This group gives pupils an effective voice in helping to improve the school, such as planning new playground equipment and choosing and purchasing new books for the library. Pupils have a very good appreciation of healthy lifestyles. They benefit from frequent physical education lessons and after school sports clubs. They know how to keep safe and behave very responsibly inside school and in the playground. As a result of their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils respect the views, values and beliefs of others. Through fund raising activities and participating in a good range of local events, pupils gain insights into how they can help to enhance the lives of others. Pupils' high standards of literacy and numeracy and ability to use their initiative mean that they are very well prepared for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers ensure that pupils are fully aware of what is expected during lessons and that pupils have a clear picture of the progress they have made. Teachers provide pupils with helpful advice about how to improve their work. Pupils are given good opportunities to apply and extend their speaking and listening skills, for example, as they discuss their ideas with a partner. The good pace to lessons and effective classroom

management mean pupils stay focused and are productive. Teachers make imaginative use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, to produce interesting lessons that stimulate a desire to learn. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and refine their ICT skills in other subjects. This was evident when pupils in Year 6 were creating a PowerPoint presentation of their poems as part of their work in English. Teachers have not placed sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' investigative skills in science and so progress in this subject is not as good as in others. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given extra support and this helps them to make the same progress as other pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The way the curriculum is planned means that pupils are able to build upon previous learning experiences in English and mathematics and so make good progress and attain high standards in these subjects. Planning has been recently modified to enable pupils to have more opportunities to take part in focused scientific investigations to accelerate progress in science. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this modification. Themed weeks, such as book, science and modern foreign languages weeks, are used well to add interest to the curriculum and provide pupils with opportunities to work collaboratively. There are good opportunities for pupils to use their skills in ICT to enhance their work in other subjects. The wide range of out of school clubs and visits to places of educational interest, including residential stays, makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. There are effective links with others to extend pupils' learning, particularly in terms of their sporting prowess.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'Offham is a very happy and caring school.' This parental comment is typical of the views of many and accurately portrays the school. Pastoral support is excellent with all pupils being cherished within a very caring and safe environment. Their work, behaviour and attendance are recognised and celebrated in assemblies. Child protection procedures are very thorough with all staff knowing what to do if they have concerns about a pupil.

Risk assessments are extremely rigorous and ensure pupils' safety in and around school and during offsite visits. Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Very strong links with outside agencies mean these pupils receive the extra support needed to meet their needs. Academic guidance for English and mathematics is strong with a good system for checking pupils' performance over time to ensure that they all know their targets and what they need to do to improve. Guidance is weaker in science, particularly in checking and improving pupils' investigative skills.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There is a clear vision for school improvement that is shared by all those involved with the school. Although achievement is good and standards in English and mathematics are high the school is not complacent. Its self-evaluation is rigorous and has accurately identified and prioritised areas in need of development. The subject leader for science has worked closely with the local authority to recently introduce a range of strategies to improve pupils' achievement and standards in science. It is too early to evaluate the success of these strategies, although the school has a strong track record in bringing about improvements. There has been good management of the high staff turnover in recent years to minimise disruption to pupils' learning. Performance management effectively links staff professional development to school improvement. The school's senior management team has been recently restructured and the monitoring role of some managers is not yet fully developed. Governance is good with governors being very supportive of the school and active in questioning the proposals of the senior management team. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school's recent track record shows there is good capacity to make any necessary improvements.

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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?	1
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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	2
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 very much for welcoming us into your school. We really enjoyed talking to many of you and finding out about all the things you do. I would like to tell you what we found your school does well and how it could improve further.

Your school is good and enables you to make good progress and achieve standards that are well above average by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. Your standards in writing are exceptionally high and you are given many opportunities to write at length in English and other subjects. Your achievement in science is not as high because your investigative skills are not developed as well as they could be. Your behaviour is outstanding and you show so much care and consideration for others. You are given interesting things to do and the curriculum is enlivened by the many after school clubs you can join. The school takes very good care of you and makes sure you feel safe and secure. You are really good at taking on responsibilities such as being a member of the school council. Your parents are so pleased about the way the school looks after you all.

There is one thing your school could do to help you do even better:

- Improve your investigational skills to raise your achievement and standards in science.

All my best wishes for the future.