



Aylesham Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118563
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291170
Inspection dates 15–16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Eira Gill

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Attlee Avenue
School category	Community		Aylesham
Age range of pupils	4–11		Canterbury CT3 3BS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01304 840392
Number on roll (school)	199	Fax number	01304 842437
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Leon King
		Headteacher	Gerry D'cruz
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most new children at the school start in the Neighbourhood Nursery which is jointly funded and managed by the school and the Pre-School Learning Alliance. Children's attendance at the Nursery varies between one half-day session a week and full time. Children move into the school's Reception class at age four. Around two-thirds are admitted in September and a third in January. An above average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school is part of the Aylesham Children's Centre, which provides extended services to the community, including additional provision for adult education. The number on roll is dropping because of a falling birth rate in the area. Many families are not economically advantaged and this is reflected in the above average take up of free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background. There have been a number of staff changes in the last two years.

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 a good school which lies at the heart of the village community. There is a real buzz of enthusiasm from pupils and adults. The quality of leadership and management is good and provides very clear direction. As a result, pupils achieve well. The school's motto, 'Where Children Come First', is very evident especially in the outstanding care and pastoral support given to the pupils. This is a key strength in the good care, guidance and support given to pupils. Children thrive and grow in confidence because they are valued.

The provision for children before and after the school day is appreciated by parents, who are beginning to work better with the school to raise standards. Effective links with support services that include neighbourhood projects and special schools bring additional expertise that is geared towards all pupils' achievement and well-being. Parents confirm the school is always welcoming and their children feel safe, healthy and enjoy their education. Pupils experience a good curriculum that is rich and interesting. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved well.

Pupils' personal development is good. Older pupils have significant responsibilities and make a positive contribution to the community. This is evident during lunchtime when older pupils act as leaders in organised games and also support the younger children in the dining hall. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to their learning so no time is wasted in lessons and pupils make good progress. Attendance is satisfactory although a small number of pupils do not attend regularly.

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. The classrooms are exciting places in which to learn. A particular strength is in the marking of writing, which has had a positive impact on standards. Pupils are pushed hard, particularly in Year 6, to think of how they can improve their work. Although teachers' questions are always relevant, they are not always tailored enough to focus on the needs of individual pupils.

Many children start school below the levels expected for their age. The good progress they make right from the Nursery means that the gap closes as they move through the school, and by the time they leave in Year 6, standards are average. There was a dip in standards in 2006 but, because of more settled staffing arrangements and better tracking of progress, pupils in Year 6 are now back on line to achieve average standards. The checks made on pupils' progress were not done soon enough last year to spot potential problems. The energetic leadership team, supported by good governance, has tackled successfully the significant weaknesses highlighted by the last inspection and the capacity to make further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop teachers' questioning skills so that individual pupils are challenged more effectively.

- Make sure pupils' progress is evaluated early enough so that there is a quicker response to any identified lack of progress.
- Work with parents to improve the attendance of the very small number of pupils who do not attend regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and, because they make good progress, standards are average by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Despite good provision in the Nursery, children start the Reception year with below average skills in most areas of learning. Their social development and literacy skills are well below expected levels. Children make good progress in Reception because teaching is good. Their social and literacy skills improve but are still below average when they enter Year 1. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 tests have been exceptionally low for many years. There was improvement in both 2005 and 2006. Standards are now broadly average and achievement is better. This is because of improved teaching methods and a more effective focus on the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. In Years 3 to 6 pupils' overall achievement has been good for some time although there was a slight dip this year. The reasons for this have been tackled and Year 6 pupils are now doing well. Although broadly average, standards are higher in mathematics and science than in English. The school's own tracking shows that all groups of pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6 because more focused strategies for teaching and assessment have been put into place, particularly in writing. Pupils have developed satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills which will equip them for the future.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good attitudes to learning and their enjoyment of school help to ensure their good achievement. Their social skills are good and improve as they grow older because of the exemplary systems for pastoral care. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is improving again after dropping back this year and is now satisfactory, but a very small number of pupils do not attend regularly. Pupils form good relationships with one another and adults. The games in the playground led by older pupils have improved behaviour, which is now good, and the number of exclusions has dropped considerably. Pupils feel valued, safe and secure. The school council fulfils its role well and has a voice. Pupils participate in local events and gain insights into how they can enhance the lives of others. They understand the need for healthy eating and exercise. They say, 'We know how to keep healthy because we're a healthy school...our dinners have changed and we have five fruits and vegetables each day.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have high expectations, both of the progress that pupils will make and of their behaviour and attitudes. Consequently, pupils enjoy their lessons and respond positively to the challenge. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards well to engage pupils and, particularly, to help them improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Teachers' marking of pupils' work is good and there is plenty of evidence to show that good guidance is given to pupils on how to improve their work. Teachers plan well to meet the full range of needs in their classes, especially for the pupils who find learning difficult. They deploy their teaching assistants constructively. The main area to improve is the further development of teachers' questioning skills. Questions are not always sufficiently focused to challenge individual pupils better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and much improved. The high quality of displays of pupils' work reflects a lively and broad curriculum. There is a good range of learning opportunities in both Nursery and Reception, with 'mix and match' planning for children to work in both classrooms depending on their needs. This is matched by equally effective planning in Years 1 to 6. The writing curriculum has improved to suit the needs of pupils better, particularly boys, and standards have risen. New programmes of learning for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities have proved effective, with more appropriate small steps of learning. The planning of the programme of work for gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage. The school uses links with other groups and local people to further enhance the curriculum. Provision for ICT is much improved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a school where every child really does matter. The care and pastoral support offered to pupils are outstanding. A parent commented, 'My day is easier as I know my child is being well looked after and comes home a happy boy'. Academic guidance is good. Child protection procedures are robust and understood. Pupils feel safe and say, 'I feel safe because we've got lots of teachers to talk to'. Parents have access to educational courses and the school runs workshops to explain what children are learning. Teachers' marking is effective. Targets are in place for all pupils but, sometimes, they are written in language that is too difficult for the pupils to read.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good, with a dynamic partnership between headteacher and deputy. This leadership team has been successful in building an energetic group of senior leaders and governors who are effective in checking how well the school is doing to ensure improvement. The school consults parents and pupils and their ideas are included in the school's future development plans. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and has contributed significantly to pupils' continuing improved overall achievement. Sharply focused plans for improvement are being implemented well and pupils' attainment is rising, particularly in writing. Procedures for tracking pupils' progress have improved. Teachers' expectations have been raised and more challenging targets set. Teachers' assessments are checked and evaluated by leaders. The current timing of this monitoring does not enable the school to respond promptly to any dips in pupils' performance.

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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	3
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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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 all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. Your headteacher and other members of staff have made many improvements since the last inspection and it is now a good school. There are one or two things that need to be done to make the school even better. We are asking the staff and governors to make a small number of improvements.

- Here are the things that we think are best about your school:
- The headteacher, the deputy headteacher and all other staff look after you well and make sure you are safe and happy.
- Most of you work hard and make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- We think your teachers are good and make lessons interesting for you.
- Those of you who find it hard to learn quickly and have problems getting around make good progress.
- Best of all, you really enjoy school; you are well behaved and work hard in lessons.

- These are the things that we think the school could do better:
- The teachers could make sure that when they ask questions, all of you have to think hard about the answer.
- The school needs to check your progress a bit sooner in the school year so that you can be given more help if you need it.
- The school, working with you and your parents, could think of more ways of making sure you all come to school regularly.