



Chiddingstone Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118599
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291185
Inspection date 9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Kevin Hodge

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chiddingstone
School category	Community		Edenbridge
Age range of pupils	4-11		TN8 7AH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01892 870339
Number on roll (school)	150	Fax number	01892 871205
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Michael Swan
		Headteacher	M E Cooke
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. 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 higher levels of abilities than is typical, particularly in their social and language development. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. The Reception class is currently being taught in temporary accommodation a short distance from the school, but new classrooms and additional facilities are due to be completed later in the year. Most children attend the adjacent Nursery before starting in school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Chiddingstone is an excellent school. Very high levels of commitment from staff, pupils and parents underpin the very happy atmosphere and 'can do' attitude found. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, supported extremely well by governors, has been significant in maintaining the very high expectations that all have for the school's success. This is reflected in the exceptionally high standards reached by pupils in English, mathematics and science. Improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) results in pupils now reaching above average levels of attainment in this subject. Standards are high in other subjects too.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding overall. This is because teaching and learning is consistently top quality. Good teaching and an exciting range of activities get children off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage, although the development of their physical abilities is hampered due to a limited range of outside equipment. However, provision is generally effective. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) also achieve extremely well. One parent summed up the view of many, 'My daughter has achieved so much in such a short time, it has been like "switching a light on" to all those abilities I knew she had'.

Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development are excellent. They speak very highly of all the opportunities they have to extend their skills and interests, particularly through the outstanding curriculum. These are supplemented by a significant number of well-attended extra-curricular clubs. Links with the community are very high profile and musical and cultural links are enjoyed by pupils and parents alike. Not surprisingly, the attendance of pupils is good. Their good punctuality is aided by some extra-curricular activities starting before school.

The staff's and governors' efforts to improve upon the very good picture from the last inspection have been well directed and very effective. The balance between maintaining pupils' high academic standards, while developing their other talents and interests, is just right. The excellent care, guidance and support help pupils thrive and improve. They help promote the 'magical atmosphere' in the school, rightly noted by another parent.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the range of outdoor equipment for Foundation stage children to extend their physical abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve extremely well in relation to their starting points, which are generally favourable. Progress is good in the Foundation Stage and excellent in Years 1 to 6. This is due to consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' motivation and enticing curriculum. In the Foundation Stage, children's physical activities are

hampered by a narrow range of outside equipment, but in all other aspects they all reach or exceed the targets set for them. Standards in Year 2 are well above average in reading, writing and science. In Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science have been well above average for some time and have risen to being exceptionally high, particularly in mathematics. The number reaching the higher Level 5 in all subjects is consistently higher than the national picture. This prepares pupils well for their next phase of education. Pupils now achieve very well in ICT, along with other subjects such as dance, drama and art work. Throughout the school, children often exceed the very challenging targets set for them. Pupils with LDD also achieve very well because of the early identification of their difficulties and the well-focused help they then receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very enthusiastic, confident and mature learners. Their enjoyment is reflected in their regular attendance and good punctuality. Reception children settle in quickly, aided by close ties with the Nursery. Pupils are very well motivated in lessons because of the lively activities they do. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. As a result, they are extremely courteous to each other and to visitors. Their awareness of life in a culturally diverse society is aided by close ties with pupils in schools from different backgrounds and faiths. As one pupil said, 'Although we are a small school, I feel well prepared for the big life outside'. The school council takes its role very seriously, influences improvements and wants to do more. Pupils like running the tuck shop and, by doing this and raising their own funds for trips, they develop good awareness of budgeting. This prepares them very well for later life. Pupils often choose healthy food options and drink water regularly. A high number of sports-based clubs are well attended and significantly aid the pupils' level of physical activity. Pupils have many high profile links within the community, such as singing at local events and services, raising money for good causes and staging an annual opera.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is consistently good in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 to 6, it is outstanding due to the wide diversity of activities taught and very high expectations. Pupils respond well to these expectations and work very hard. Imaginative planning and lively, enthusiastic teaching make learning very interesting for pupils in nearly all classes. In a successful Year 4 activity, pupils enjoyed the dimmed classroom, gentle background music and candlelight to help them feel inspired to write poetry. Teaching assistants provide good additional support, especially for pupils with learning difficulties. The quality of learning is often increased through a good emphasis on regular practical 'hands-on' activities and visits to many different locations beyond school. In a very few activities, teachers' questioning of some pupils could be more demanding, but

generally it is good. Teachers assess their pupils closely and frequently. The level and consistency of marking is good throughout. The use of colour-coded comments to highlight both weaknesses and how to improve are innovative and liked by pupils. The needs of other groups of pupils, including those with LDD, are well met with high levels of help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is high quality. It is effectively matched to the needs of all pupils enabling most to make outstanding progress. Interesting activities with enticing titles such as a 'Yuk' day, to highlight digestive processes in science work, stimulate pupils' imagination and love of learning. Activities in the Reception class are exciting and focus on key skills very well, but the full range of outdoor physical activities are more difficult to provide. Excellent literacy, numeracy and now ICT planning results in pupils of all abilities making rapid gains in these key skills. Learning French, along with opportunities to develop simple lifeskills, prepares pupils well for their future economic well-being. There is a good programme to help pupils to understand how to keep healthy and safe. Pupils' personal and emotional development is very well supported through good and regularly planned 'discussion and tutorial times' in all classes. A very wide range of out of school clubs and visits significantly enriches learning beyond class. A good number of links with other schools helps to extend pupils' creative and academic skills significantly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils know that they are respected and valued, and feel very secure in discussing any problems with any adult in the school. Child protection procedures are very effective and arrangements for securing pupils' health and safety are rigorously implemented. The systems to identify support and monitor pupils with LDD are well established. The school works effectively with many outside agencies, such as school nurses, dentists and social services, as well as parents, to support pupils who need specific help. Arrangements when pupils join the school from the Nursery or for those who join the school at other times are very good. Past pupils are invited back to speak to Year 6 friends to help dispel any anxieties they may have prior to moving to secondary school. Older pupils also receive very high levels of personal support in small tutorial groups to help address issues. Pupils have an excellent range of personal and class targets to which they often refer. This focuses their efforts to improve very effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. This ensures high levels of support for pupils, staff and often parents. It sets very high expectations for all. The expertise of staff both within school and beyond is used very effectively to extend the pupils'

experiences and talents. Although the last inspection painted a very good picture overall, the desire to improve and drive standards up still further has been successful. The process of self-evaluation is rigorous. It involves many different people and aspects. Parental concerns to improve security were addressed quickly. An improved website has aided communication, and more frequent parental consultations are now in place. The headteacher and staff strike a very good balance between maintaining pupils' excellent academic skills and fostering their sporting or creative talents. The very high quality curriculum and consistently positive teaching are monitored very effectively and improvements made wherever possible. Governors give very high levels of effective support. They are closely involved with and shape self-evaluation processes effectively. They also helped devise a very effective travel plan. Monitoring the progress of the clear and relevant improvement plan is carried out conscientiously and innovatively. It enables governors to act as knowledgeable 'critical friends', know the progress of initiatives, and push for additional improvement. The capacity to improve further is excellent.

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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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
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	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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 making my visit to your school so enjoyable. I liked looking around and meeting you. Thanks for the chats at playtime and lunchtime. I liked the cake with my tea!

Here are some of the 'highlights':

- you work very hard to make Chiddingstone an excellent school
- you said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you do
- you make very quick progress in your work and reach very high standards by the time you leave
- children in the Reception class settle in well and quickly feel at home
- teaching is really top quality
- the activities you do in lessons like your special 'Yuk' day or musical activities like your annual opera are excellent
- you all behave brilliantly and the school helps you become very mature and sensible
- your involvement with local events in the community is really good
- all the staff and governors work really well together to find out what needs doing next to keep your school being one of the best.

I have asked the school to look at this one special thing to improve, but they will keep looking for others I'm sure:

- to give the children in the Reception class some more exciting outdoor equipment so they can really get active when they choose to go outside and play.