



St Alphege Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118659
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291204
Inspection dates 5–6 October 2006
Reporting inspector Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Oxford Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Whitstable
Age range of pupils	4–7		CT5 1DA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01227 272977
Number on roll (school)	188	Fax number	01227 263826
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Michael Vince
		Headteacher	Sue Evans
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

Age group 4–7	Inspection dates 5–6 October 2006	Inspection number 291204
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large infant school but numbers have fallen in recent years because quite a lot of houses in the area have been bought as second rather than family homes. An above-average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities, and the school caters for a small but growing number of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Nursery provision is being added to the school. Building work is almost complete and the nursery is due to open shortly. Over the past year, there have been gaps in the senior leadership team caused by long-term staff sickness.

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 where pupils are exceptionally well looked after and where they make good progress. As a parent commented, 'The school is a happy place that genuinely cares for its pupils, both academically and with their emotional development.' The recent gaps in the leadership team have been seized on by the headteacher as an opportunity to spread leadership responsibilities more widely across the whole teaching staff. This has led to a shared commitment to school improvement through exceptionally rigorous target setting in every subject. The result has been raised standards. Though children's skills and abilities are significantly below average when they start school, they make good progress in the Reception Year and in Years 1 and 2, so that standards by the end of Year 2 are in line with those expected nationally. This represents good achievement. Achievement is even better in pupils' personal development. In response to the high quality of welfare support provided, pupils' social and moral development is outstanding. The school has been very successful in creating an environment where children feel safe and where they are happy, well behaved and keen to learn. A notable feature of lessons is how interested and involved the pupils are, with all joining in and volunteering answers to the teachers' questions. Too often, however, teachers try pupils' concentration unnecessarily, because they expect them to sit on the carpet for long periods until they become restless and fidgety.

From the start of the Reception Year, the curriculum is very closely tailored to pupils' individual learning needs. This is continued in Years 1 and 2, and the many pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language do well because they are well supported. Sometimes, however, the work set for the most able pupils is not as challenging as it could be. The sheer range of opportunities provided to pupils is outstanding for children of this age. They cover topics in much depth. The school keeps careful track of every pupil's progress in every subject and the curriculum is enriched through an unusually wide range of clubs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide able pupils with more challenging work.
- Ensure that pupils are not expected to sit for too long on the carpet.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start school, many have skills that are significantly below average. From the start of the Reception Year, the children grow in confidence as they quickly learn orderly routines. Although standards remain generally below those expected for pupils' ages by the start of Year 1, children make good progress through this Foundation Stage of their education because the activities they are given are closely matched to their learning needs. This good progress continues through Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2, standards are in line with those expected nationally and pupils have the basic skills they need for their continuing education. The many pupils with learning

difficulties and those learning English as an additional language do well because support in lessons is carefully matched to their individual needs. There is less tailored support for some of the more able pupils, who could tackle more challenging work and make better progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, particularly given that so many pupils start school with weak social skills. Children enjoy school and are keen to learn. They work very well together and care for each other. Older children carry out an impressive range of responsibilities very well, such as being 'buddies' to younger ones. The school council encourages all pupils to contribute ideas to improving the school. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of how to be healthy. When the lead inspector told pupils of his fondness for chocolate and for watching 'Star Trek' on television, even the youngest children admonished him and warned him of the need for healthy eating and regular exercise! Behaviour is good and the school has been remarkably effective in improving the behaviour of pupils with emotional problems. Pupils feel very safe in school and know that they can talk to adults about any worries they might have. Children contribute very effectively in a number of ways to the well-being of others, such as making regular donations to support a child in Malawi. Attendance is broadly average and the school has good systems to discourage avoidable absence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make learning fun. They turn even mundane routines, such as Reception Year children hanging up their coats, into exciting adventures by firing the children's imagination. Parents particularly commend teachers' approachability and described how they were 'very pleased with the help and support' that followed. In the main, work is well matched to pupils' abilities. This is particularly the case for pupils with learning difficulties, who benefit from very effective support from the teaching assistants in every class. These pupils' learning is carefully matched to their needs. The same is not always true for some of the more able pupils because the work they are set is not as challenging as it could be. Teachers get on very well with their pupils and this helps to motivate the children because they like their teachers and are keen to please them. There is a very high level of participation in most lessons, so that all pupils are attentive and involved. In some lessons, however, teachers expect the pupils to sit for too long on the carpet until they become restless and their concentration begins to wane.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum excites children and motivates them to achieve well. Though there has naturally been a focus on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics, this has certainly not been at the expense of other subjects. A remarkably wide range of interesting topics, such as a recent project on Isambard Kingdom Brunel, covers themes in depth and extends pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. An excellent range of popular lunchtime and after-school activities further enhances children's experiences. The school has been innovative in securing additional curriculum enrichment through sports grants and local projects. This has helped subject leaders to contribute more actively to their subjects. The Foundation Stage curriculum is very well planned and stimulating, encouraging children to enjoy their learning and do their best.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and this contributes strongly to children's excellent personal development and good achievement. Older pupils know exactly how to improve their work. Although younger children have similar targets, they are not as well aware of them. There are excellent systems to ensure high quality care and support for the many vulnerable pupils, including much-needed help for some families. The very effective support of teaching assistants helps pupils with learning difficulties to make good progress. Pupils with emotional difficulties are especially well supported. As a result, their behaviour is vastly improved and they and others in the class are able to learn well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Much emphasis is rightly placed on the importance of personal development to ensure that children grow as confident and responsible individuals. The leadership team has been particularly effective in this and in creating a happy climate where children want to learn. Recent gaps in the leadership team have not been a hindrance to school improvement because the headteacher has used them as an opportunity to share responsibility more widely across the teaching staff. This has helped to empower subject leaders in a shared drive to raise standards. For example, pupils' progress has been monitored in every subject – not just English and mathematics – with challenging targets for all teachers to improve pupils' achievement. Staff are justifiably proud of their success in raising attainment: 'Standards were raised this summer, so we can go even further now. The sky's the limit really.' Governors are very supportive of the school, although the governing body has carried several vacancies to which it is currently recruiting. Governors provide increasingly constructive challenge to the leadership team. They have high aspirations for the

school and realise the important role they can play in its improvement. As one explained, 'The better we're doing the job, the more we see how much further we could go.'

The school did not evaluate all aspects of its work as highly as the inspectors. The school's self-evaluation is nonetheless effective because it has resulted in measures being put in place to successfully improve the quality of provision and to raise standards. This, and the good improvement since the last inspection, shows that the school has good capacity to build on its successes and to improve further.

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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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	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?	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?	2
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	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

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school:

- This is a good school where staff all work together to help you do well.
- The school looks after you really well and makes it a happy place for you to be.
- You are given lots of interesting things to do.
- Children who need extra help do well because of the help they are given.
- You get on well with each other and know a lot about how to stay safe and healthy.

These are the things that we think could be better:

- Some of you are set work that is too easy for you.
- You get uncomfortable because you have to sit on the carpet for too long.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.