



Pluckley Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118669
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291207
Inspection date 1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Sheila Browning

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Pluckley
School category	Voluntary controlled		Ashford
Age range of pupils	4-11		TN27 0QS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01233 840422
Number on roll (school)	116	Fax number	01233 820324
Appropriate authority	The local authority	Headteacher	Richard Rule
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small village school takes pupils from a fairly wide area and from diverse social and economic backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British origin with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. A few Roma/Traveller families are also represented. The attainment of children on entry to the school is below that expected. In recognition of its work the school has been awarded the National ICT Mark, Activemark, Healthy Schools status and holds the Investors in People Award. The school is part of a Rural Action Zone, which links small schools together in rural locations. The school has experienced significant staffing instability over the past two years, including at senior leadership level.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Pupils behave well and thoroughly enjoy school, which reflects their good personal development and well-being. They work diligently and, when challenged sufficiently, are eager learners. Positive relationships are a significant feature of Pluckley. Achievement is satisfactory, although there is some variation in how well pupils are doing across the school. Standards are broadly average by Year 6. Reception children make a sound start to learning and progress is satisfactory. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Progress in Years 3 to 6 has been hampered by instability in staffing and pupils are now making up lost ground. Nevertheless, variations in performance remain. Currently boys and more able pupils do not achieve their full potential in writing and mathematics because they are not always well challenged. The school is tackling this through improving opportunities to write and more practical approaches to teaching mathematical skills. Improvements in these areas are now coming through. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from the Traveller community make good progress because they receive good quality support. Teaching is satisfactory, although recent improvements are not yet sufficiently established; for example, assessment information and marking are not used sharply enough.

The curriculum and arrangements for pupils' care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good aspects. The curriculum provides many exciting learning experiences. A range of sporting and creative opportunities, together with interesting information and communication technology (ICT) projects, contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. Nonetheless, the curriculum does not consistently provide sufficient challenge, particularly in writing and mathematics, for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The school works well with parents and other agencies. Parents are pleased with the school, particularly the good quality care, and say, for example, 'teachers make the entire learning process fun and interesting'. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation systems have recently been improved to focus more on raising pupils' achievement although there has not yet been enough time to make impact on standards. The headteacher and senior leaders share a common sense of purpose and know there are improvements to be made. They are well supported by governors and the local authority in this aim. Governors are keen to develop their responsibilities and are now well placed to check the school's provision more rigorously because they are better informed about its performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Years 3 to 6, especially by boosting the achievement of boys and more able pupils in writing and mathematics.
- Make more effective use of assessment information and marking to raise achievement.
- Develop the role of governors in more rigorous monitoring of the school's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the school with lower skills than expected for their age in several areas of learning. By the end of the Reception Year, steady progress ensures that most are on course to work within the goals set for the start of Year 1. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make good progress, reaching above average standards by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 to 6, overall achievement is satisfactory but rates of progress have been inconsistent in recent years, as a result of the extended period of instability in staffing. In 2006, boys and more able pupils did not achieve as well as they might in writing and mathematics. School test results in 2006 were not as good as in 2005 and school targets were not met. Stable staffing, more rigorous monitoring of pupils' learning and more effectively targeted intervention programmes are improving standards in Years 3 to 6, although they are not yet rising as quickly as lower down in the school. Those pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from Roma/Traveller families make good progress because they receive well-targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils speak with enthusiasm of the opportunities they can access at school. Behaviour is good and the quality of relationships throughout the school is a significant strength. Pupils show sensitivity to the needs of others, including those with disabilities who are integrated seamlessly. In spite of the school's efforts and some recent improvements, attendance remains no better than satisfactory. A significant proportion of the absences results from term-time holidays, reflecting local circumstances. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They recognise and celebrate the successes of others, and know the difference between right and wrong. Cultural development is good, and pupils have an awareness of the diversity of cultures and customs which define contemporary Britain. Close links with the local church community help to promote spiritual development. Pupils are very aware of the need to keep fit and healthy and know how to stay safe and avoid the dangers of smoking and drugs. They contribute well to the school and local community through taking on many responsibilities and through the strong church links and participation in village events. Workplace skills are developed satisfactorily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage their classes well, relationships are good and pupils speak very positively about the way that they are taught. Teachers know their subjects well and explain the key ideas clearly. Their lessons have clear objectives, which are shared with the pupils. ICT is used particularly well in teaching, where interactive whiteboards

enhance the presentation. It also supports pupils' learning through good use of personal computers at school and home and through inter-school initiatives involving video-conferencing. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in most lessons, promoting better learning by groups of pupils. In the Reception Year, teaching is appropriately focused on developing children's independence.

While there have been improvements following the extended period of staff change, some weaker aspects remain. Teachers' expectations are not consistently high for some pupils, particularly the older and more able, and this continues to constrain their achievement. There is a lack of rigour in the marking of pupils' work, with, at times, insufficient explicit guidance as to how they can improve their performance. Opportunities are missed to promote the use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum. At present, pupils' work is not as strongly reflected in school display as it might be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Many creative and practical activities planned across subjects help and enhance pupils' learning and understanding. Good use is made of ICT, such as in video-conferencing, and the local and immediate environment. Specialist teaching in languages, music and sport, and numerous well supported enrichment activities, from Tai Chi to gardening, contribute significantly to pupils' personal development. These and the links through the Rural Action Zone prepare them satisfactorily for their future lives and enjoyment of learning. Boys' achievement in writing is showing signs of improvement because of the whole school focus on writing for a range of purposes. The more rigorous monitoring of teaching, and reorganisation of intervention and support programmes are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Nevertheless, lesson planning for more able pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing in Years 3 to 6, does not consistently provide the necessary challenge. Provision for Reception children has been strengthened and children now have sufficient opportunities to learn through well structured practical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

A secure, happy and harmonious learning environment ensures that pupils feel very safe and greatly enjoy school. The significant majority of parents rightly feel that their children are well cared for. Child protection procedures are robust. Good attention is given to pupils' health and safety and the school complies fully with current requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from the Traveller community are supported well; consequently they make good progress in their learning. Liaison with outside agencies is effective in ensuring good quality support for these pupils. The arrangements for supporting pupils' academic progress, whilst satisfactory, are not sufficiently ensuring consistently good achievement. Individual targets for pupils' academic improvement, whilst established for the oldest pupils, are not embedded throughout the school and do not yet form part of daily

practice. As a result, expectations for more able pupils are not always sufficiently high. Whole school tracking systems exist but are not yet used effectively enough to raise achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The restructured leadership team knows the school well and there is a strong sense of common purpose and teamwork. The school's self-evaluation shows an accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Recent training has resulted in senior leaders being much more sharply focused on checking the school's effectiveness. This has led to them developing and defining their roles to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to monitor teaching but, until recently, these have lacked sufficient focus on setting the highest expectations for all pupils. More rigorous and regular observation of teaching and learning outcomes in the last two terms is having a positive impact. Resources have improved significantly in ICT and these enhance teaching and learning.

The school listens to, and takes account of, the views of many stakeholders. Its partnership with outside agencies, including the local authority, is good, and has led to improvement, for example, in Reception class provision. The leadership has largely dealt with the weaknesses identified in the last report. Nonetheless, there are residual shortcomings in raising standards and in the use of assessment information, particularly to provide more challenging work for more able pupils. The governing body provides good support. The chair of governors is aware that to improve its effectiveness further, governors need to be more rigorous in checking the school's performance. Given recent improvements, the school shows a satisfactory 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	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?	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	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
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

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking and listening to you and seeing your work. Your school gives you a sound education and is improving.

These are some important things we found out about your school:

- We were impressed with your behaviour and you told us how much you enjoyed school, particularly all the extra-curricular clubs and activities you do.
- You are making steady progress in your work, and those in Years 1 and 2, and those of you who find learning hard are making especially good progress.
- The adults in school look after you well. They also work well with your parents to ensure that you are cared for.
- You told us that you know how to lead safe and healthy lifestyles.

This is what we have asked the school to do to make it even better:

- In Years 3 to 6, make sure that boys and those of you who learn quickly improve your skills in writing and mathematics.
- For teachers to use assessment information to set work that is at the right level for you and to give you guidance on how to improve your work.
- Make sure that governors (who help the headteacher to run the school) check how well you are all doing.