



Ide Hill Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118722
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291225
Inspection date 16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Sudworth

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ide Hill
School category	Community		Sevenoaks
Age range of pupils	4–11		TN14 6JT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 750389
Number on roll (school)	98	Fax number	01732 750802
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	David Attwood
		Headteacher	Rodney Pomfret
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4–11	16 November 2006	291225

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils attend Ide Hill Church of England Primary from a wide geographical area. The school is much smaller than average. Apart from the Reception class, the pupils are organised in three mixed-age classes. Attainment on entry is above average and the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is around the national average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds or eligible for free school meals.

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 provides a satisfactory education for its pupils with strengths in pupils' personal development, which is good, and the good care and guidance that the school provides for its pupils. A parent commented, 'Ide Hill is a very caring school and I wouldn't want my children to be anywhere else.' This view reflects those made by others. Led by the headteacher's example, staff have created a happy school with good relationships that help the pupils feel secure. As a result, pupils enjoy school, behave well, attend regularly and concentrate in lessons. A strong feature is the way that pupils look after one another as part of a large family. Good links with the church reflect the school's strong Christian tradition which does much to promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most parents strongly support the school, although some feel that they could be better informed about what their children do in school so that they can be more involved with their learning.

Standards are generally above average but inconsistent. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. The skills and experiences of many children on entry are better than in most schools. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Writing is a weaker area because pupils are not given enough help to improve. The progress of the oldest pupils accelerates in English and mathematics so that most reach their predicted levels. They do not achieve well enough in science in Years 3 to 6 because pupils do not plan and carry out enough investigations for themselves. Pupils are capable of doing better in both writing and science.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan learning for the mixed-age classes well so that most work is appropriate for pupils' capabilities. However, they do not always ensure that pupils take enough pride in their written work, which is often untidy.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is developing further as better links are made between subjects and the use of time is considered more critically. Good provision for personal education ensures that pupils know how to live healthily and safely. Pupils respond by taking part enthusiastically in the extra-curricular provision. Strength in the arts is reflected in the school's Artsmark Gold Award. The inclusion of French supports pupils' cultural development well.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are still settling into newly assigned roles following the school's recent reorganisation of its leadership and management structure. As a result, the delegation of duties and some management systems are still developing. The school's monitoring of work reveals areas of strength and matters for improvement, but as yet the outcomes from this process are not pursued rigorously enough to secure these improvements. The governing body has a good range of expertise and shows a strong commitment to the school. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has a sound capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of writing in Years 1 and 2 and improve the presentation of written work throughout the school.
- Provide more opportunities for investigations to improve pupils' progress in science in Years 3 to 6.
- Ensure that the results of monitoring by leadership are pursued to secure the necessary improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children begin school with skills generally above those normally found. Standards by Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, although inconsistent across the school. Children achieve satisfactorily in the Reception class. Most reach the expected goals for the end of the Foundation Stage and several exceed them. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. The national test results in Year 2 are usually above average in reading, mathematics and science, but frequently below average in writing. This is due to both a lack of rigour in analysing what pupils have written, and also insufficient guidance to them on how to improve. Throughout the school, written work is frequently untidy.

Except in science, pupils' progress increases in Years 5 and 6, allowing more able pupils to reach their potential. A good proportion of Year 6 pupils reach the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics because careful attention is paid to their needs. Their reading and speaking and listening skills are strong. Pupils sometimes underachieve in science because they do not have enough opportunities to carry out investigations, or to follow them up and explain their findings scientifically. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because of careful attention to their needs and good use of external professional services.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils engage effectively in decision making through the school council and know that their views are considered seriously. For example, they decide which charities they should support and work very well to raise funds, which contribute strongly to their economic understanding. Two pupils have initiated a project to save stamps for 'guide dogs for the blind' and spoke in assembly about it. They thoroughly enjoy having responsibilities and undertake them conscientiously. Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding. This is reflected in their good attendance. They have the confidence to share any personal problems with their teachers. They behave well and are very polite, forging extremely good relationships with one another. If pupils are left out, others thoughtfully invite them to join in with their own play. One pupil commented: 'The good thing about a small school is that everyone is your friend.' The

older ones look after younger pupils with much maturity. They have a good understanding about healthy lifestyles and keeping safe, for example, knowing why they cannot bring nuts to school with their fruit. They participate well in sport and in community events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, including in the Foundation Stage. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage them well. They make good use of interactive whiteboards which add to the interest of lessons. Lesson planning is good and generally matches work well to pupils' abilities. Teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties effectively, providing individual support to ensure that they can undertake their activities. This gives these pupils the confidence to succeed.

The teaching of writing in Years 1 and 2 and of science in Years 3 to 6 is not sufficiently effective and pupils do not always do well enough. A significant number of pupils do not take enough care or show sufficient pride in their written work and teachers are prone to accept untidy work. Marking is satisfactory overall. It is up-to-date and indicates a genuine interest in what the pupils have done. However, written comments do not consistently help pupils take the next steps in their learning. Teachers' specialisms are well used and French is taught very effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, is satisfactory. There is a strength in the arts for which the school has received the Artsmark Gold Award. This reflects good work in dance, drama and music and contributes well to pupils' personal development. Some good links are beginning to be made between subjects. In an English lesson in Year 4, pupils were writing as if they were Celts at the time of the Roman Invasion. Curriculum time is below the minimum recommended in Years 3 to 6 and as French is successfully included, the time available for different subjects is affected adversely. Consequently, not enough time is available for investigative work and follow up in science, which affects standards. Sufficient time is devoted to physical education to encourage fitness and a healthy lifestyle and is supported by the good range of extra-curricular activities. Good use is made of visits to places of interest and the locality for learning, as well as the school's grounds. Visitors, such as the fire service, are used effectively to help pupils understand personal safety and the safety of others. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and able pupils in numeracy and English in Years 3 to 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff take good care of the pupils. Pastoral support is particularly strong. Child protection, health, safety and the welfare of pupils are good. Very good links with external agencies support pupils who have learning or other difficulties well. Relationships with parents are good and reflected in strong parental support for the school. Most parents feel that staff are accessible to discuss any matter concerning their children. The very strong links with the church contribute to pupils' good spiritual and moral development. Careful records of pupils' progress in mathematics, English, and information and communication technology (ICT) support pupils' progress well in these subjects but the school recognises that further development is needed to help pupils understand how they can improve their work. Pupils are well prepared for their future education and life beyond school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is instrumental in creating a happy atmosphere in the school, based on mutual respect which contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. All staff benefit from the sharing of what has been learned on professional courses.

The school improvement plan is thorough but over-detailed and contains too many initiatives so that the key areas for improvement are difficult to pick out. Under the school's new staffing structure, some aspects of the school's leadership duties are rightly being distributed, but their full effect is still to be seen. The checking of teaching and learning takes place regularly, but emerging issues are not followed up rigorously enough to ensure they improve learning and move things forward. For example, weaknesses in pupils' attainment in writing in Years 1 and 2 and in science in Years 3 to 6 have not been pursued vigorously enough and so pupils' progress in these areas has remained a comparative weakness for a considerable time.

The governing body is keen to move the school forward and it has good systems for ensuring financial control. It has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but is not involved sufficiently in contributing to the school improvement plan or in holding the school to account for its performance.

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	2
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	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	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	2

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?	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?	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 your very warm welcome when we visited your school and for talking to us about your work and what you do. We very much enjoyed our day. Your own development as individuals shown in your behaviour, politeness, and interest in school is good. The care that the older pupils take of the younger is extremely good. It is as if you belong to a large family. You understand clearly the importance of keeping yourselves safe and how to live healthily and show much concern for the environment. You undertake your class and school responsibilities well and your school council makes good suggestions for further improvements. All the staff take very good care of you.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, as is the education that is provided for you, including the class activities. Teaching and learning and the progress that you make are also satisfactory. Some of you make good progress. Whilst you reach good standards in some aspects of work, in others, they could be higher. Many of you read well but the standard of writing by Year 2 and the quality of your investigations in science by Year 6, for example, could be better than they are. Some of you do not write neatly enough and can be untidy in your work. We feel that these are areas for improvement in which you can help. We have asked your teachers to make sure that they pick up on this when they mark your work and when they plan lessons. Those of you who find learning more difficult try really hard and often make good progress.

The teachers want to make your education even better for you. To do this, they are looking at the arrangements for you in school and are also visiting classrooms. We have asked the staff to make sure that the results of these visits are followed through to help make your lessons even more interesting. Then you can be even prouder of your school.

We wish you all well for the future and hope that you will work hard to achieve your ambitions.