



# Dover, St Mary's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 118748  
**Local Authority** Kent  
**Inspection number** 291236  
**Inspection dates** 22–23 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Selwyn Ward

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Laureston Place
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Dover
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		CT16 1QX
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 206887
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	258	<b>Fax number</b>	01304 205152
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Gavin Wright
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Liz Waller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 May 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 4–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22–23 February 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 291236
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This school is larger than average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is above average. Although broadly average, the proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language has increased significantly in recent years, including many pupils who join and leave the school partway through their education as their families relocate.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Its 'mission for the 21st century' is to work in partnership with parents 'to provide a happy atmosphere and stimulating environment that will actively encourage each child's development and progress'. The effectiveness of the school's good leadership and management is evident in the school's success in creating this positive climate for learning. One parent commented accurately that 'pastoral care is particularly good, and qualities such as caring, kindness and leadership are all nurtured and developed'. Good care, guidance and support certainly mean that pupils feel happy and secure and increasingly refer to personal targets that help them to do better. As the school has itself identified, however, marking does not always give pupils clear enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This represents a significant achievement, particularly for those pupils who join the school with quite challenging behaviour. Pupils enjoy school because the good curriculum helps to make learning interesting and fun. They get on well with each other and with their teachers. Several parents commented on how their children had grown in self-esteem. As one put it, 'My daughter is always happy to go to school and, as a result, is a bubbly, confident child'.

Standards are average and this represents satisfactory academic achievement. Children join the school with a wide range of abilities, and there is rather a wide variation from year to year. Generally, however, they join with skills that are a little below average. Children get off to a good start in the Reception year and make good progress in this Foundation Stage of their education, so that almost all reach the levels expected for the start of Year 1. Results in the national tests in Years 2 and 6 have not always been high enough but they are improving as a result of the more thorough systems that have been introduced for assessment. This is very clearly evident in writing, where the reasons for the underachievement in recent years have been correctly identified and successfully tackled. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but with a growing proportion of good teaching so that pupils are now often making good progress in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties do particularly well because they benefit from good support that is carefully matched to their needs. This is also true for those pupils who join the school other than at the normal time, which includes many who are learning English as an additional language. The school has recognised, however, that teaching does not always match work closely enough to the wide ability range in each class, and especially in maximising the challenge for more able pupils.

Staff and governors have a shared commitment to school improvement. School self-evaluation has an overly positive picture of the school because it represents more where the school is aiming to be rather than where it is now. However, the school's obvious success in supporting pupils' personal development and its embracing of recent change to improve provision and raise standards show that it has a good capacity for further improvement. There is no doubt that parents share this positive view. As one confessed, 'If I was eight again, I would also look forward to going to school each day here!'

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking gives pupils clear and consistent guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Better match work to the full range of abilities in each class so that it provides as much challenge to the most able pupils as it does to those with learning difficulties.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. In the Reception year, children make good progress from their generally below average starting point. Almost all reach and a few exceed the early learning goals expected for children at the start of Year 1. Results have fluctuated in the assessments taken at the end of Year 2, but the trend in recent years has been downward. In 2006, standards were below average. Work in the current Year 2, however, is notably better and shows that the decline in attainment has been reversed. In the Year 6 tests, although standards have been broadly average in most years, there has been underachievement in the recent past in English, and particularly in writing. A whole-school initiative to improve standards in writing has proven successful. Test scores in 2006 show that the improvements in writing have eliminated the previous underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, particularly in relation to their specific learning needs. This is the result of the careful monitoring and good support that they receive. The picture is similar for those who join the school partway through their primary education, including many of those who are learning English as an additional language.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The school is a friendly and safe environment where pupils show respect towards each other and the staff. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school. Children in the Reception year are keen to learn and listen with rapt attention to what is being said, particularly from Rainbow Bird (a puppet).

Behaviour is good. Although a small minority of pupils have behavioral difficulties, they are usually managed well and rarely disrupt their own and others' learning. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils acquire a good understanding of different faiths and cultures, and a good awareness of the world around them. Strong community links, including fund raising for charities, buying a patch of tropical rainforest and performing in concerts, help to develop appreciation of the skills needed in the workplace. Preparation for the school's upcoming enterprise week is also helping to raise pupils' economic awareness.

Pupils have a real sense of belonging to and pride in the school community. This is reinforced by the good opportunity for Year 6 pupils to represent allocated classes on the school council. Councillors value the chance to listen to the views of their constituents and to share ideas. Pupils have a good appreciation of safe and healthy

lifestyles. They benefit from regular physical education lessons and a good number of after school sports clubs. They feel safe at school and report that any rare incidents of bullying are 'sorted'.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers' confident subject knowledge and well organised planning lead to generally well paced lessons with clear learning objectives. In these stimulating lessons, pupils have fun and enjoy learning. There are, however, missed opportunities to extend pupils' learning especially that of the more able pupils, for instance through targeted questioning, carefully matched work, self and peer evaluation and opportunities for paired and group talk. Whilst behaviour management is good, the behaviour of a minority of pupils can, just occasionally, interrupt lessons. There are examples of exemplary marking but this is not consistent throughout the school and much marking gives pupils insufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which is extended through theme weeks, visits by specialist teachers and theatre groups. Together these provide good enrichment and support for pupils' learning and personal development. In the Foundation Stage, activities are planned well to stimulate children's interest. Throughout the school, the curriculum is well planned, balancing basic skills, creative work, sport and social skills and helping to make learning fun. Teachers are increasingly identifying imaginative ways of linking subjects together so that, for example, pupils can learn history while focusing on aspects of literacy. Much of this is quite new, however, and it has not had time to have an impact on raising standards. Links with the community, including the local church, are an important part of the school and help to feed the pupils' enthusiasm. Good use is made of the school's unusual multi-tiered hillside site and there are attractive and stimulating displays that cultivate pupils' interest and celebrate their achievement.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school's caring ethos means that pupils are valued as individuals and grow in confidence. Teachers know their pupils well. Parents are satisfied that their children are well cared for and that the school will deal effectively with any worries or concerns. Procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe and well protected are securely in place.

Arrangements for assessment have been recently revised and improved. Assessment is effective because it is used to focus support where it is needed most. Pupils are given group targets in literacy, reading and mathematics and agree individual targets

for personal development. These highlight what the pupils need to do to improve. Teachers, however, do not always set challenging enough targets for the most able pupils. The system for checking and recording how well pupils are progressing and for tracking their performance over time is comprehensive but it has not been in place long enough to have had an impact on improved test scores. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English. Good links with parents and outside agencies ensure that these pupils' needs are regularly assessed and reviewed.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and leadership team have a clear vision for the school. They have established a calm, caring ethos, based on Christian values, where pupils feel safe and want to learn. They have also successfully identified those areas where improvements have been needed. They have, for example, already eliminated the previous underachievement in writing. There have been several other significant changes made over the past year, for example, in improving the systems for keeping track of each pupil's progress. Observations of lessons by school leaders have tended to focus more on the features of teaching rather than on learning. As a consequence, there are still some shortcomings in teaching and learning which hold back progress, especially for the more able. There are good links with external agencies, including social services and other local schools. The school has drawn well on the support of the local authority in implementing its recent initiatives.

Governance is good. Governors are very supportive and play a full role in the life of the school. They have a good appreciation both of the strengths of the school and of those areas that need to be improved, and they provide constructive challenge to the headteacher and leadership team.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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	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. We think your school is giving you a sound education. Teachers are helping you to make reasonable progress and many of you are making good progress, especially those of you who get extra help. We were particularly pleased to see how much your school is improving.

Here are the best things about your school:

- The headteacher and staff have made a number of recent changes that have helped to improve the school and the quality of some of the work. This is particularly noticeable in your writing.
- Most of you behave well and really enjoy your lessons. Your parents are especially pleased at how you are becoming much more confident young people.
- Staff take good care of you and help you feel safe.
- You like the way that teachers try to make learning fun and look for ways to give you lots of interesting things to do.

These are the things that could be better:

- Marking of books in some classes could give you clearer guidance on how to improve your work.
- You could be given work in lessons that is better matched to what each of you needs to learn. At the moment, some of the work does not stretch all of you as much as it could.

Each of you can help by making sure you all know and concentrate on achieving your group and personal targets and by continuing to work hard.

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