



St Mark's CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125185
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293221
Inspection dates 28–29 November 2006
Reporting inspector George Rayner

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Franklyn Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Godalming
Age range of pupils	3–11		GU7 2LD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01483 422924
Number on roll (school)	154	Fax number	01483 425225
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Colin Stokes
		Headteacher	Mrs Christina Albrecht
Date of previous school inspection	29 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	28–29 November 2006	293221

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is located on the outskirts of Godalming and is smaller than most. Standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are below expectations in most years, but those of the current children are close to expectations. There is an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The great majority of pupils have White British heritage and few are at an early stage of speaking English. The school values its close links with the local parish church for their contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate. Standards are exceptionally low in English, mathematics and science and pupils' achievement is inadequate. Although pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress, a large proportion of the other pupils do not progress sufficiently from their starting points. In many classes, teachers do not plan well enough to make sure that all pupils achieve adequately. Teachers do not always ensure that work maintains a motivating pace. Consequently, while pupils enjoy much of what they do, many need further attention to sustain their involvement. Although most pupils attend school regularly, a small number have too many absences and this affects their progress. Good provision in the Foundation Stage means that children make good progress in their learning and personal development.

The school's caring ethos and the commitment of staff ensure good pastoral care for pupils, so that most feel safe and happy. The school succeeds well in encouraging pupils to be enthusiastic about healthy eating and taking exercise. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to school life, but say they would like their ideas to be listened to a little more. As many pupils do not make adequate progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, they are not sufficiently prepared for their future education.

Parents and the whole school community respect, support and value the headteacher's commitment to creating the school's caring ethos. This commitment underpins the pastoral care and has motivated a drive to develop a curriculum that enriches pupils' lives. However, the leadership team is not ensuring a strong enough emphasis on raising achievement and standards, or succeeding in sustaining improvements. Consequently, the school's capacity to improve is inadequate.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teaching helps pupils to make adequate progress in all lessons.
- Improve the senior staff's focus on the most urgent areas, to speed up and sustain improvement.
- Encourage the pupils whose progress is affected by unsatisfactory attendance to come to school more regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are exceptionally low and achievement is inadequate. In most recent years, standards at the end of Year 2 have been very low in reading, writing and mathematics. The 2006 National Assessments showed that pupils were broadly average in mathematics, but the current Year 2 pupils have very low standards. Standards at the end of Year 6, which had previously been very low, improved in 2005 to average levels. In 2006, they returned to very low levels however, especially in mathematics. Current pupils' command of a range of writing styles is much more limited than expected for their ages. Many pupils lack confidence and ability in mental arithmetic and lack the skills to tackle written problems. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress in developing basic skills and confidence because their needs are carefully identified and teaching assistants help to provide effective additional support. Children make good progress towards their learning goals in the Foundation Stage, because activities are well geared to the way in which young children learn best. They develop their social skills, attitudes to learning and ability to use language especially well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils generally enjoy their learning, although many often need encouragement to keep up their concentration and effort. Behaviour in the playground and at lunchtimes is good. In lessons, some pupils need reminders of what is acceptable behaviour to ensure that they and others can concentrate on their work. The caring ethos helps pupils to be well mannered and friendly and to feel safe and secure. Links with the Church contribute to the pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Attendance is below average, although unauthorised absence is extremely low. The school does all it can to encourage regular attendance, but a few pupils have too many absences.

Pupils show a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. Many pupils spoke very enthusiastically about school lunches. One voiced the opinion of many when he said, 'School lunch is great, it's healthy and helps our brains work better.' The school council organises fund raising for various causes, but pupils do not yet have a real sense that their voice is heard in the school. Pupils participate in events in the local community and with a local boarding school. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example in the 'buddy system' between Year 6 and Reception children. Pupils are developing skills in team working and the youngest children are already learning to work together to find solutions to problems. This is useful preparation for pupils' future lives, but their basic skills are not good enough to equip them sufficiently for the later stages of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate. In too many lessons, large proportions of pupils make insufficient progress as teachers do not plan well enough to ensure that learning moves on briskly. When some pupils consequently lose concentration and willingness to work, many teachers have limited strategies to deal with this. Teachers give too little attention to planning work to meet all pupils' needs. This means for example, that there is too little challenge for the most able pupils and they do not make enough progress. A strength of teaching is that support assistants work effectively with teachers to give additional help to pupils who need this. Because of this, pupils with learning difficulties learn satisfactorily when working individually or in small groups. Teachers mark work in an encouraging way. They quite often give tips to help pupils to improve, but these are not closely enough related to the steps that need to be taken to make progress in each subject. Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage because teachers understand well how young children need to move forward. As a result they plan enjoyable activities that encourage the children to learn by playing and exploring.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The Foundation Stage curriculum succeeds well in helping pupils to develop their ability to use language and numbers and their social skills and confidence. In other years, the curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to learn all of the subjects that they need to. The school has recently improved its curriculum by introducing lessons in French for all pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage. Improvements to provision in information and communication technology mean that all pupils are able to have a weekly lesson in the computer suite. The school plans to improve its resources further so that pupils have more computers available in the classroom to use as a natural part of their work. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards, but teachers are not yet using these as regularly as they could to involve pupils.

The curriculum is enriched well. Pupils enjoy the extra curricular clubs that give them opportunities to take part in a range of sporting, creative and cultural activities. Participation in theatrical performances and choirs boosts their presentational skills and confidence. Parents praised the 'fun and exciting' opportunities to learn to play musical instruments. Visitors provide good additional opportunities. For example, teachers from a neighbouring boarding school bring exciting science activities such as a planetarium.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for its pupils. Pastoral care is good. Parents say they feel that their children are safe and well cared for. Most pupils enjoy good relationships with adults and each other. Child protection procedures are secure and effective and all statutory requirements are in place. The school's provision for promoting pupils' health and safety ensures that they adopt healthy lifestyles well. Each pupil's academic progress over time is recorded and teachers use these records satisfactorily to give individual guidance. However, they lack the expertise to use them well to ensure that work and challenge are closely matched to each pupil's ability.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leaders and managers do not have an accurate view of the school's performance, especially the impact on pupils' academic achievements. Consequently, they have an over-generous view of its effectiveness.

This is largely because decisions are not informed by rigorous and accurate evaluations of the impact of provision on pupils' progress. Most strategies introduced to promote improvement have generally lacked a sharp enough focus on standards. Because of recent staffing instability, most subject leaders have only recently taken up their posts. They are beginning to work together as a committed and coherent team and recent initiatives are more sharply focused. However, these have yet to have sufficient impact in raising pupils' achievements. The Foundation Stage and the provision for pupils with learning difficulties are well led. This results in good achievement by the youngest pupils and satisfactory progress of those with learning difficulties.

Recent changes to the structure of the governing body are beginning to help governors to focus their work on pupils' achievement and standards and to be more active in holding the school to account for its actions. However, the changes are very recent and the impact of their work to date is insufficient to ensure the necessary improvements.

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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and we are grateful for the help you gave us by talking to us and letting us look at your work.

We decided that your school is inadequate because there are some important things that it is not doing well enough. For instance, many of you are not helped to make enough progress in English, mathematics and science. Your work does not always stretch you enough, so that the most able of you do not have the chance to show what you can really do. The adults who lead the school have not concentrated enough on improving some of the things that are most vital for you to make good progress. Although most of you come to school regularly, a few are absent too often and this makes it difficult for you to keep up with your work and do well.

We were also able to see that there are good things in your school. The headteacher and the staff care for you a lot and work hard for you. They make sure that you are safe and happy. You behave well around the school and are polite to visitors. Those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes are learning and growing up well. This is because this part of the school is well run and the adults know just how young children learn best. Those of you who find learning difficult are also given helpful extra support to make sure that you can cope with your work.

We have asked the school to get as much help as it can to quickly build on these good things and improve the other things that are not yet good enough. Very best wishes for the success of you all.

George Rayner

Lead Inspector