



West Kingsdown CofE VC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130948
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 293674
Inspection dates 25–26 January 2007
Reporting inspector Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fawkham Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		West Kingsdown
Age range of pupils	4–11		Sevenoaks TN15 6JP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01474 853484
Number on roll (school)	250	Fax number	01474 853114
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Pat Bosley
		Headteacher	Ian Whittaker
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 25–26 January 2007	Inspection number 293674
--------------------------	-----------------------------------------------	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is a little larger than average and some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. A number of pupils are of Gypsy/Roma origin and some of these children, in particular, join or leave the school part-way through their primary education.

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 children feel valued so that they grow in confidence and achieve well. As a parent explained, 'My child is making good progress because she works hard. The teachers support this ethic.' Pupils certainly respond well to the encouragement they are given. Their personal development is good. They enjoy school and are enthusiastic in lessons. Again, this is appreciated by parents: 'My children enjoy going to school every day and are happy at the end of the day having had a good day.' Pupils think of the school as a safe haven, and behaviour, which they say has sometimes been a problem in the past, is now exemplary.

Creating a climate where pupils feel secure and want to learn is a key achievement of the headteacher and leadership team. What makes leadership and management good is the shared passion that staff have for the well-being and success of the children in their charge. They carefully monitor each pupil's progress and effective measures are put in place to help those who may be at risk of falling behind. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and others who need extra help do well because they are given support that is carefully tailored to their needs. Pupils say that when they are not sure how to do something the school gives them the confidence that 'I can do it'. Teaching and learning are good because teachers have generally high expectations and are successful in engaging the interest of their pupils and making sure all are fully involved. The quality of their planning varies quite widely, however. The very best ensures briskly timed activities that are well matched to the full range of age and ability in the class. Where planning is sparse, lessons, though satisfactory, sometimes move at a slower pace and work is not always as closely matched to pupils' ability, especially of the most able.

Standards are broadly average. Children join the school with skills that are significantly below average. They get off to a good start in the Reception Year. Because they benefit from good teaching and well targeted support, they make good and, in some cases, outstanding progress. Almost all attain the early learning goals expected of children of this age, but few exceed these goals, which means that standards are still below average at the start of Year 1. Although standards in the rest of the school are average, they have fluctuated over the years. Last year, test results rose sharply in Year 2 but fell in Year 6, particularly in mathematics. The school has responded effectively to this drop in performance, drawing well on support from the local authority, to improve, for example, the teaching of problem-solving skills. As a result, pupils are now doing much better in mathematics.

The curriculum is good because it is made relevant and interesting to the pupils, with an impressive range of extra-curricular clubs and other activities. Arrangements for pupils' care, support and guidance are good. Pupils are looked after well, and this plays a major part in their growing confidence. Marking gives them good feedback that helps them improve their work. However, although pupils all have targets on which they are expected to focus in English and mathematics, many do not know what their targets are because they do not routinely refer to them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a common approach to lesson planning so that, in every class, learning moves at a good pace and pupils are all set work that gives them appropriate challenge.
- Ensure that pupils more regularly refer to and use their targets so that all know what they most need to focus on in order to do better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and this represents good achievement. Children join the school with abilities that are significantly below average. They make good progress in their time in the Reception class so that the vast majority attain the early learning goals expected of children during this Foundation Stage of their education. Few, however, exceed these levels, and that makes standards still below average by the start of Year 1. Pupils generally attain average standards in their Year 2 assessments, although in 2006 standards were significantly higher. By contrast, standards dipped last year in the Year 6 tests, particularly in mathematics, but they were broadly average in the previous two years and are broadly average now. Pupils with learning difficulties do well because they benefit from good support. That is also true for the pupils from Gypsy/Roma backgrounds. These pupils' performance is significantly better than that of children from similar backgrounds in other schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe because attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Pupils and parents identify this as a significant improvement. The pupils respond with enthusiasm and excitement to the school's systems of rewards and commendations, awaiting with baited breath the week's announcement in assembly of the team with the most house points. Pupils enjoy school because there are 'lots of interesting things to help you learn'. Most arrive punctually and attend regularly, although absence rates were relatively high during the inspection because it coincided with heavy snowfall that resulted in school closures within the region. Pupils are friendly, very polite and well mannered, and even the youngest and those with additional learning needs listen very well indeed. They have a good awareness of the need for a healthy diet and regular exercise.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. They learn to value themselves and others. Pupils work well together and make many contributions to the local community and to charities. They develop a good understanding of their own and other cultures. Through joint musical productions with a church in Deptford, pupils are meeting and working alongside others from backgrounds different to their own. Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. However, they would like to have even more of a say about everyday issues and for the school

to listen to them even more. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education because their key skills in literacy and numeracy are broadly average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is a feature of this school, prompting a Year 6 pupil to comment: 'The teachers are good. They help us just enough so we know we can do it.' Some examples of excellent lesson planning provide a clear structure to support teaching and identify well paced learning activities for pupils of all abilities. However, planning varies from class to class. Where it is skimpy, too long is allowed for some activities and more able pupils, in particular, are not always set challenging enough work. Teachers have good subject knowledge. When expectations are very high, as in the two outstanding lessons seen, pupils rise to the challenge and all achieve their very best. Children's positive attitudes to learning and their evident enjoyment of lessons help them to build very good learning habits. Teachers' very good behaviour management ensures that there is always a calm and purposeful atmosphere. This helps to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Teachers' good marking helps pupils to improve and pupils are often helped to evaluate their own progress. Teaching assistants provide very effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and others who need extra help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The varied curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and interests and helps them to achieve well. As one Year 5 pupil said, 'Teachers give us interesting things to help us learn and we always learn something new.' The stimulating curriculum in the Reception Year ensures that these children enjoy their learning and make good progress. Information and communication technology is used creatively to support learning across the curriculum and the school is developing good links between subjects that help make learning interesting and relevant, although these are not as strong in every class. Numeracy has correctly been identified as a priority for development, and the focus on problem-solving skills is already helping to raise standards. A wide variety of clubs and activities provides good curriculum enrichment and French is now taught throughout the school. Children benefit from a range of interesting visits, visitors and events and good links with other schools and organisations enhance children's learning experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Support for pupils' personal development is good. From the moment they enter the school, children are encouraged to do things for themselves and think about what

they are learning. They are given good feedback on how they are doing. However, not all pupils know the targets that identify what they need to focus on in order to do better. This is because these are not always readily in front of them, in their books or on their desks, and not routinely referred to.

Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. Risk assessments are carried out well and there is good attention to all health and safety issues. Pupils confirm that the school's arrangements for dealing with any, now rare, incidents of bullying are effective. The school includes and provides well for pupils who have learning difficulties and others who need extra help, for example, when joining the school part-way through their primary education. It works in productive partnership with families, pre-school providers and support agencies, such as those supporting Gypsy/Roma children and their families. As a result, some individual pupils have made remarkable progress in relation to their learning needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and leadership team have succeeded in creating a positive climate for learning where all pupils feel valued and are encouraged to do well. All leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are clearly focused on school improvement. Their regular, detailed lesson observations enable the effective monitoring of learning and have helped to raise the quality of teaching. Leaders' careful analysis of pupils' performance and progress over time enables them to set challenging whole-school targets aimed at raising standards. This well coordinated approach is already showing success in raising standards in mathematics. The entire staff work very effectively as a team with a shared sense of purpose. However, the school improvement plan incorporates quite a long list of unprioritised objectives and is light on criteria against which school leaders and governors can measure success.

Questionnaires are used effectively to gauge the views of all parents and pupils and to address any concerns they raise. The well informed and supportive governing body provides appropriate challenge for the school and is also well focused on raising standards. The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and the improvements that the school has shown since the last inspection demonstrate that it has a good capacity to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	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	2
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. You are rightly proud of your school. We think it is a good school where the teaching is good and you are helped to grow in confidence and make good progress.

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

- We were really impressed with your excellent behaviour and pleased to learn how much you enjoy your lessons.
- Your headteacher and staff have been successful in creating a climate where you want to learn and do well.
- Staff take very good care of you.
- You like the good range of clubs and other activities on offer and the way that what you are learning is made interesting and relevant.
- Those of you who need extra help do especially well because you are given such good support.

These are the things that we think could be better:

- When they plan your lessons, some of your teachers could make sure you get a lot done and that the work is not too easy for some of you.
- It would help you to make even better progress if you all knew and made regular use of your targets in English and mathematics.

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