



Cliffe Woods Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118527
Local Authority Medway
Inspection number 294776
Inspection dates 1–2 February 2007
Reporting inspector Joan Lindsay

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	View Road
School category	Community		Cliffe Woods
Age range of pupils	4–11		Rochester ME3 8UJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 220822
Number on roll (school)	285	Fax number	01634 221008
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Christine Karie
		Headteacher	Tim Watson
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cliffe Woods Primary School is larger than average and serves the local housing estate and rural area on the Hoo Peninsula. Nearly all the pupils are from White British heritage families. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average but there are fewer pupils than average who have statements of special educational need. The number of pupils in the school has been steadily declining owing to demographic reasons. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Artsmark, Sportsmark, (Activemark), Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investor in People and Eco-Schools award.

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 school with strengths in the good teaching and standards seen in the Foundation Stage, and in the pupils' personal development and well-being. Standards are in line with the national average and pupils make satisfactory progress in this friendly, caring school.

Children come into the Foundation Stage with standards similar to those expected for this age and progress well, benefiting from good teaching and support and investment in new resources. National test results improved in 2006 for pupils at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 so that they are now in line with national averages. Achievement is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory across the rest of the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress. The school is gathering more test and assessment data than previously and this is now identifying pockets of underachievement. This process is still relatively new. Consequently, it is not yet used consistently across the school to ensure that teaching and learning are focused on enabling all pupils, particularly the more able, to achieve as well as they could. However, the school is aware of this and is taking steps to improve areas of relative weakness such as in mathematics, and the achievement of higher ability pupils.

Teaching is satisfactory. Some lessons go at a cracking pace and pupils are well supported by very effective support assistants. However, lesson objectives are often not focused well enough on what particular groups of pupils are to learn and this results in a lack of challenge for the more able pupils. The curriculum is satisfactory and has strengths in the good range of activities. Adults are very caring towards pupils and because of this pupils feel safe in the school. The academic support and guidance that pupils receive, whilst satisfactory and improving, still needs to focus more on helping pupils understand what they need to do to achieve more.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils behave well and they love coming to school, as shown by their good attendance levels. Strong relationships amongst pupils and adults result from the good social and moral development that pervades the school. The school is aware of the need to enhance pupils' experiences of today's multicultural society. It works well with others such as parents, the pre-school groups, the comprehensive school and external agencies to promote pupils' well-being and to extend their learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is focused on raising standards and there is evidence of improvements coming through such as the improved 2006 results. Self-evaluation is sound although an understanding of the school's areas for development needs to be more secure in middle management. Monitoring of teaching is carried out regularly by the headteacher but there is now a need for more staff to be involved in robust monitoring to ensure the roles of middle managers are developed effectively so that standards are improved across the school. The previous inspection was almost seven years ago and much has changed in the school, not least with the change of leadership. Steps have been taken recently to promote improvement with 'green shoots' now beginning to come through. With a stronger focus on raising

standards the school has sound capacity to make the necessary improvements and it gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment and tracking data more effectively so that underachievement, especially in mathematics, is identified and dealt with swiftly.
- Ensure that lessons have clear objectives and appropriately challenging tasks so that learning is focused on meeting the needs of pupils of all abilities, especially the more able.
- Strengthen the role of middle managers and ensure more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning in order to raise standards across the school, particularly in mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Children start in the Foundation Stage with average standards and they now make good progress in most areas of their learning. Particular strengths are in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their creative and physical development. This good progress is a result of starting all children at the beginning of the year, improving the quality of teaching and the substantial investment in resources. Results at the end of Year 2 improved considerably in 2006 so that standards are broadly average across all three areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Fewer than average numbers of pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics, however. Progress is considered satisfactory because this group of pupils had not benefited from the recent improvements in the Foundation Stage. Progress is also now satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Results in 2006 for pupils in Year 6 showed a marked improvement in English and in science. Results in mathematics were slightly below the national average although they did improve from 2005 levels. Again, fewer pupils reached the higher levels in mathematics than in English and particularly in science. The school has only recently begun to use assessment data to track progress closely and this has highlighted where progress needs to be improved. There is now an awareness of the need to improve standards throughout the school and particularly in mathematics. Several strategies such as setting for mathematics and more regular testing are beginning to have an impact. Nevertheless, the school's systems to track pupils' progress across English, mathematics and science are not yet being used effectively by all staff to ensure that pupils, especially the more able, achieve as well as they can.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their social, emotional and moral development is good as the happy and friendly atmosphere throughout the school shows. Spiritual and cultural aspects are developing well. Pupils behave well

and say they enjoy school. One Year 6 pupil said, 'I've been here for seven years and there's not one moment I haven't enjoyed.' They are proud of their school and speak about their achievements with enthusiasm. Through the active school council, pupils are confident they are able to make decisions and give examples of where they have made changes, such as in the choice of playground equipment and setting-up a rota for the use of football pitches. Pupils are enthusiastic to take on responsibility, for example when older pupils distribute milk to younger children and house captains put out break-time play equipment. They feel safe and well protected at school. One pupil commented, 'Most of us have known each other since Reception, so we're all really good friends.' Pupils are clear about healthy lifestyles including diet and exercise. Progress in computing skills, strengths in teamwork and positive attitudes to work prepare the pupils well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in the Foundation Stage, where brisk and well focused lessons lead to good progress. Throughout the school many lessons move along at a good pace and are interesting and well resourced so pupils are keen to learn. Teachers give pupils opportunities to explain their ideas and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' expectations for participation and attentiveness are generally high although a few pupils are too passive. Some lessons do not set out clearly enough what pupils of different abilities are expected to learn, and this is a significant weakness. As a result, some groups do not make the progress they should and not enough is expected of more able pupils in particular. The work given to pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities generally matches their needs. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning when they are given the opportunity to make best use of their skills. Marking gives encouragement to pupils but they are not asked regularly enough to improve their own work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall although some aspects of it are good. Pupils benefit from a stimulating range of wider experiences including a residential visit, special events, visits and visitors. There is a good range of after-class clubs that are well attended. All of this has a positive impact on the pupils' personal development and well-being.

The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, offering a lively and well structured balance of activities. For Years 1 to 6, planning for all subjects is based on formal guidelines with a stimulating emphasis on practical and creative work. The school has achieved national awards for its work in physical education and the arts. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources have improved since the last inspection

and the new suite is used well for teaching in most subjects. Class work is successfully adjusted for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, guided by their education plans. However, the quality of the curriculum suffers because work for other pupils is not consistently set at the right level for their age and ability, particularly for the more able. This affects the progress made throughout the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Staff know pupils well. The strong support and encouragement they give them is a good feature across the school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, knowing who to turn to if they need help. Incidents of bullying are rare, and there are effective procedures for dealing with them.

The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in English and mathematics have recently improved and are now satisfactory. Progress is now assessed more frequently, allowing underachievement to be tackled earlier. This has led to more focused teaching of mathematics to older pupils. However, assessment information has not yet had enough impact on teaching through the school, particularly in guiding lesson objectives and in setting targets for individuals. Targets set for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are satisfactory, although progress against them has not always been assessed or recorded in enough detail to show the next steps for learning clearly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, who has been in post for 16 months, has a clear understanding of the need to continue to raise standards across the school, especially in mathematics. Strategies that he has introduced are beginning to take effect as evidenced by the improved results in 2006. However, there is a need to ensure that teaching and learning are rigorously monitored and that data is tracked and used effectively by all staff to tackle underachievement. The role of middle managers also needs to be strengthened to enable them to participate fully in monitoring progress throughout the school. Evaluation is needed through observing teaching more and analysing data thoroughly so as to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can. The governing body performs its duties satisfactorily and is very supportive of the headteacher. Governors are extending their knowledge which is enabling them to be more challenging, particularly in relation to standards.

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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	2
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	3

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	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

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	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

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing what you do in your lessons and in assembly. It was very helpful to hear what you think about your school when we talked to you at lunchtimes and when we met the school council.

We think your school is satisfactory with some good things about it. You behave well and clearly love coming to school. You obviously know how to keep healthy and how to get on well together and you think the adults do a good job looking after you. The children in the Reception class do well and older pupils make satisfactory progress. Teaching is sound. However, we think that your lessons could be better if teachers made sure that you always know what you are meant to be learning. We want all of you, and particularly those who might be finding the work a bit easy, to do as well as you can.

The headteacher, staff and governors give a satisfactory lead to the school. We feel, though, that it would help you if your teachers kept better records of how well you are doing and used the information to make sure that you all do really well all the way through school. We think that some of the staff need to be a bit more involved in doing this and in making sure that all the teachers ensure you make good progress, especially in mathematics.