

Salehurst Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114521 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 311632 |
| Inspection dates | 31 October –1 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | David Collard |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 167 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Lynn Lewis |
| Headteacher | Andrew McGregor |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 May 2003 |
| School address | George Hill Robertsbridge TN32 5BU |
| Telephone number | 01580 880288 |
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|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Salehurst is a smaller-than-average school. The number of pupils on roll is falling slowly because of the reducing number of families in the local area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The school has been awarded the national Activemark and a Healthy School award as well as being awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark twice.

Key for inspection grades

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| 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 pupils achieve standards above those expected for their ages and starting points and who are well prepared for their future lives. This has come about through the school's determination to improve teaching and learning and from enhancing the expertise of the whole management team. A measure of the success can be seen in the improvement in the achievement of pupils and better quality of provision.

The school knows itself well. Under the very strong direction of the headteacher, there has been a concerted drive to ensure consistency. The effective and challenging school improvement plan has put firm building blocks in place. The shared action plan, growing staff awareness and confidence of their responsibilities to whole-school development have played an important part in school improvement. From this has developed stronger teaching so that pupils make continuously good progress from one year to the next.

Pupils start school with standards broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress through the Reception Year and start Year 1 suitably prepared for more formal work. Rates of progress increase as pupils move through the school. After a previous dip in standards, the 2007 national tests in Year 2 and Year 6 showed significant improvement. Nearly all those now in Year 6 are working at the levels expected for their age and approximately half are working at levels above this. As the school has rightly analysed, improvements in the standards of writing are less pronounced. This is because opportunities to use these skills across a wide range of subjects are not exploited well enough in individual lessons.

Soon after his arrival, the headteacher undertook a thorough review of the whole curriculum based on strong principles of excellence and enjoyment. This was to ensure that teachers worked more closely with each other, providing professional challenge and development. It has generally been a very successful process, ensuring that all pupils have a balanced programme of experiences. This level of success demonstrates the school's strong capacity to continue to flourish. As one Year 6 pupil said, 'Our teacher works us really hard, gets us there in small steps so that we understand what we are doing.'

Pupils form strong bonds both with their friends and adults and are proud of their school. They behave and play well and thoroughly enjoy school life. They know what is expected of them. Because of the effective assessment procedures and ongoing support, most can talk about what they need to do to improve. Through the many opportunities to take responsibility, such as the school council, playground buddies and the recently introduced peer mediators, they are becoming increasingly mature and responsible towards each other. They make an excellent contribution to the local, national and international community through the many links that have been forged, such as with a school in Malawi. All teachers encourage pupils to improve their social and personal skills and they plan well for different levels of ability. However, not every opportunity is given for pupils to think for themselves and take charge of their own learning because teachers sometimes direct practical activities too closely and so restrict pupils' independence.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The satisfactory quality of provision in the Foundation Stage has been improved since the last inspection. Children are given appropriate activities that provide them with the opportunity to

build skills. Relationships are good and all the children settle well and enjoy school. The environment, including an interesting outside space, is generally stimulating, providing separate areas for different play activities. By the end of the Reception year, most children reach the level expected. They are able to read, write, complete simple calculations and are socially adept. However, some children, who are capable of achieving more, are not being given enough challenge because the adults direct their activities too closely. Assessments are used effectively to determine how well the children are doing. These show that children make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them. Regular and ongoing checks are undertaken and recorded. However, this information is not used as well as it could be to help direct work on a day-to-day basis.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Raise the achievement of children in the Foundation Stage to that of the rest of the school.
- Ensure initiatives to improve achievement and standards, particularly in writing, are used consistently through the school and in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The comprehensive data show that pupils in most years make at least the progress that is expected of them, with some doing significantly better. For instance, in Years 1 to 6, some classes demonstrate over one-and-a-half-year's progress in a year. This gives credence to the very challenging targets for each class that have been set for the next few years. Displays show that there are a number of potentially talented artists, designers and sportspeople. This level of progress is reflected in the most recent test results for English, mathematics and science. The higher level of variability in writing is a key area that the school is rightly addressing through more opportunities to use different forms of writing in a wider range of subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils show an excellent enjoyment in their learning. They told inspectors that they especially appreciate the many things they are asked to do. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, where pupils were working on a radio play, the teacher found it very difficult to persuade the pupils to go out to play! These very positive attitudes are reflected in the above-average attendance levels. Pupils are very polite, for instance, stepping back to let others through doors and listening carefully to each other. The school council meets regularly to discuss a wide range of issues and knows that their ideas will be taken seriously and acted upon fairly. On just a few occasions behaviour could be better as teachers have to work hard to ensure all pupils follow what they are being told. Pupils clearly understand healthy lifestyles and could show which of their foods would help them with their 'five a day'. Pupils have a good understanding about how to stay safe. One parent noted how her child had reflected on this and now felt safe walking to school since the entrance was less congested. Within the strong Christian traditions of the school, pupils show a great empathy for others from different beliefs and cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching in all classes is at least satisfactory, very often good and some individual lessons are outstanding. This is a key reason why pupils make progress through each year. There are a significant number of common strengths. These include highly specific planning showing that teachers know why they are undertaking a particular activity, behaviour management, a good pace to lessons and very good relationships with the class. The main differences between the satisfactory and good teaching are linked to lesson delivery. At its best, the teacher allows pupils to make decisions for themselves. This is based on ensuring pupils have the background information they need and them knowing where they can find the information. On some occasions, teachers overdirect the learning. For instance, in one lesson the teacher could have allowed pupils to make decisions about their practical work. In addition, there were few opportunities to record findings, which would have helped develop the whole-school issue linked to writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The wide-ranging activities are particularly good. There are many opportunities for visits and a good number of clubs, with experts called in when necessary. These all help make learning interesting and enjoyable, a fact that pupils fully acknowledge. There has been a change in emphasis in the curriculum over the last two years aimed at making much closer links between subjects. So, for instance, mathematical understanding is being developed through experimentation in science and computers are used to help in research and recording in history and geography. However, this planning is not always linked sufficiently closely to the identified whole-school initiatives aimed at improving achievement in specific areas.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This is a very caring school. One parent notes, 'There is a new culture of nurturing and caring'. There are very effective practices to ensure pupils' health and safety and staff are watchful for pupils who might be distressed or anxious. As a result, pupils know who to turn to if they have concerns. The nurture group is particularly strong and supported by well-trained adults. The importance placed on promoting a healthy lifestyle effectively shapes pupils' attitudes. In classes, pupils receive much ongoing support and encouragement. Many children know their targets well and are supported by satisfactory marking. Pupils who have learning difficulties are well supported and make good progress. The school's system of tracking pupils' progress clearly shows any pupil not making the expected progress, allowing support at an early stage. These systems are relatively new and so there is still some variability between classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a very good understanding and vision for the future, which has been communicated well to the highly supportive staff. Substantial and well-considered changes

have been made, leading to significant improvements in aspects of teaching, the curriculum, development planning and self-evaluation. The headteacher and senior teacher are a powerful working partnership who are ably leading these changes. Because of the number of recent changes to managerial posts, the good role models shown by some subject leaders are not extended to all. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that changes are affecting pupils' standards, for example, in science at Year 6. The school evaluates performance realistically and regularly seeks the views of parents and pupils. A recent questionnaire showed positive views from at least 90% of parents. In the inspection questionnaires, many parents acknowledged the improvements. However, a significant minority of negative responses indicate that communication about the many successes have not been transmitted effectively enough. Governors are very active in securing the success of the school's plans for improvement. They play an active part in monitoring and are in a good position to challenge and hold the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We very much enjoyed meeting with so many of you and seeing what you get up to at school. As I promised some of you, I have written the main points from my report below.

- You told us how much you enjoyed school and we could see why. You have some very interesting activities and get really involved in your lessons.
- You also told us how well you all get on with each other and we saw this happening both in lessons and when you were in the playground. We have said that your behaviour is good and that you have good attitudes to school.
- We think you are looked after well. You have a good understanding about being safe and healthy and we think you make an excellent contribution to your community both at home and abroad.
- We have said that you make good progress as you move through the school and this was reflected in the better test results this year. By the time you leave, many of you are working at levels at or above those expected for your ages. Keep up the good work!
- Your teachers have worked hard to make sure that they can make your work as lively and interesting as possible. We have said that we think teaching is good and in some cases exceptional. We have asked if your teachers can think of more ways to help you become better writers by giving you opportunities to use these skills more in all of your different subjects.
- We have also said that we think many of you, especially the youngest children, are capable of being more independent, so we have asked if your teachers will try and find ways to make this possible.
- Your headteacher and his staff have a good understanding of what to do to improve your school. As some of you said, you can see the improvements that have been made and you are enjoying being part of the changes.

Finally, we wish you all success for the future. You can play your part by making sure everybody knows what a good school you go to and working as hard as you can.