

Five Ashes CofE Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114526 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 311633 |
| Inspection date | 6 November 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Gavin Jones |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 44 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 6 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Penny Kemp |
| Headteacher | Paul Wickens |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 June 2004 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Five Ashes Mayfield TN20 6HY |
| Telephone number | 01825 830395 |
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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Five Ashes C of E Primary School is a much smaller than average village primary school which draws its pupils from the immediate village and other small villages in the area. The three classes all have mixed age groups. Some of the year groups can be as small as four pupils.

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

Five Ashes is a good school. It is an effective one, taking children who enter school with average abilities and helping them achieve well and make good progress so that they leave school with standards that are above national averages. 'We love this school', was what one parent said in the parent questionnaire, echoing the views of many. Virtually all responses were as positive. Parents realise that not only is the school enabling pupils to achieve well, but it is also successful at supporting pupils in their personal development. The school also judges itself good as it has well-planned opportunities for self-evaluation. This helps the school to understand what it needs to do to improve further. With such small numbers, it is not surprising that staff know pupils very well and are able to support and guide them well. Pupils respond to this positively, show good attitudes to learning, and behave well. The mixed-age classes function well as the school is developing a curriculum which caters appropriately for the range of ages. Teachers plan their work carefully for the mixed age groups but do not always offer challenges to older or more able pupils early enough in lessons. The monitoring of teaching does not identify specifically enough which aspects of work could be improved in order to raise good teaching to outstanding. Pupils contribute well to both the school and its local area. The school is at the heart of village activities and the school brings together many aspects of community life, in which its pupils take an active role. All teachers, in such a small school, have leadership roles and they fulfil these well. They are seeking to develop areas of writing, mathematics and science, although in the very recent past, the school has focused mostly on improving literacy skills, whilst the other two areas have not been in such sharp focus. Governors play an active part in school life and know the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's previous work on improving standards, achievement and teaching, together with the very corporate and collegiate nature of the teaching team make the capacity for further improvement good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There are good links with feeder pre-school providers and as a result, children settle quickly into school. They quickly become confident and independent around the classroom. Provision for EYFS children is good. They enter school with skills that are similar to those expected for their age. However, in some aspects of their readiness to write, they are below the expected level. On the other hand, their personal and social development is good. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that children's individual needs are met and that their progress is regularly checked and recorded. They make good progress in the EYFS. This is often as a result of some individual teaching for this small group, on their own. On the other hand, they benefit greatly from sharing other activities with their slightly older classmates. Children's welfare is always a central consideration and every effort is made to ensure that they are safe and happy. The several small rooms, which make up the classroom space, are being used effectively in offering a range of activities to children. However, staff have not fully adapted their practice to the new EYFS guidelines; there are not enough opportunities for children to plan and organise activities themselves and the outside area is not used regularly enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- The school should ensure a better balance between child-led and adult-led activities in the EYFS, alongside more regular use of the newly developed outside area.

- The school should raise the quality of teaching by identifying more specific areas for development, tailored to the particular needs of individual teachers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

As the numbers of pupils in each year are so small, it is difficult to make detailed comparisons with national averages. However, the overall picture is that standards are above average, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Because of anomalies caused by year group sizes, the school has developed its own good systems for tracking progress. This shows that pupils make good progress and regularly meet the nationally expected levels for their age. Because those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given such good support and are known well to all adults, they too make good progress and most of them reach nationally expected standards. The school has noted that writing has been a recurring issue over some time, with not enough pupils reaching the highest standards, especially those who are judged to be more able. It has now put into place a strategy for raising standards in writing, which is beginning to have a positive effect. At the same time, it noted issues with mathematics up to the end of Year 2. Strategies put in place here, are again beginning to have an effect and are being tracked carefully by the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is borne out by their good attendance. 'I like to work hard', said one pupil and many feel that being at a small school gives them more opportunities to shine as individuals. Behaviour is good and pupils show respect for each other, look after younger children in the mixed-age classes and out on the playground. Because of good attitudes, regular attendance and good behaviour, pupils waste very little time in lessons and as a result make good progress. Pupils feel safe in school and have a particularly strong appreciation of road safety. The school makes a good contribution to the cohesion of its scattered local community, providing a welcome series of local events, which are well attended. Pupils also contribute their ideas to ways of improving the village. They have links with countries in the wider world and understand their moral obligations to people less well off than themselves. However, they do not yet have a good enough understanding of the cultural diversity of this country. They develop good key skills to help them in the future and work together well in the class and when planning and running their own fund raising activities. 'Life is not just about levels', said one parent, 'but about the whole child.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a strong emphasis on teaching basic skills, through interesting and wellplanned activities. Such lessons often capture the imagination of pupils, as in the mathematics lesson on fireworks and the short story writing lesson focused on a ghostly experience. Teaching assistants effectively look after those needing extra support. Teachers' questioning skills are good and result in pupils being very active during their learning. Relationships are very strong and as a result, behaviour management can be of a very 'light touch' style, which rarely upsets the pace of learning. Plans often contain indications of outlines of work for different groups. However,

more able pupils sometimes have to work through the same work as others before getting to more challenging activities, which slows their progress. Pupils listen attentively and concentrate on the task in hand, showing good motivation. This is further encouraged by teachers' good use of interactive whiteboards in order to motivate pupils further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has mapped out the curriculum in order to ensure that in mixed-age classes there is no repetition or gaps in coverage of the National Curriculum. At the same time, staff make good use of linking subjects together to enrich pupils' learning. For example, they have chosen the round-the-world yacht race to support learning about different parts of the world. The school is clearly moving to a curriculum based on the development of skills. They have come some way with this approach and pupils themselves are positive about the work planned for them. However, it is recognised that this work is not yet complete. Personal, social and health education play a strong part in the curriculum, ensuring pupils' personal development is good. There is also good emphasis on basic skills in literacy and numeracy. In response to an evaluation of the quality of pupils' writing, it has adopted a new approach in which pupils have many good and varied opportunities to write for a wide range of themes. This is beginning to have a positive effect on standards, but work here is not yet completed. The school makes use of a number of specialist teachers for sport, music, art and language and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with pupils making regular use of facilities in their local secondary school. This gives good breadth to the curriculum. The school makes good use of the village recreation ground for sporting activities. A wide range of interesting visits, to London and Battle Abbey for example, supports first hand learning and brings enrichment to the curriculum, as does the range of club activities provided by teachers after school. 'There are a surprising number of opportunities provided by such a small school', was a parental comment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff make every effort to get to know every child and their family well and make good use of their knowledge to help pupils develop into rounded individuals. Pastoral care is very good and the school's procedures for safeguarding its pupils are robust. Pupils who have learning difficulties are identified early and given individualised support, as are those pupils noted as being gifted and talented. As a result, many of the former reach nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science, in spite of their particular needs. Teaching assistants and the new coordinator for learning difficulties and/or disabilities play a key role in providing this support. The school is in the process of helping pupils to gain awareness of what life is like in the multicultural society which they would find beyond the boundaries of their villages. This is currently work in progress. The arrangements for academic guidance are consistent and well understood by pupils. Marking of work is undertaken carefully and regular feedback to pupils helps them make further progress. Regular assessments are made by class teachers and collated by the headteacher in order to track pupils' progress carefully and set targets for further improvement. This helps learning to become a very individualised process for many pupils. They are also being involved gradually in planning topics, making suggestions for what might be included in their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher shows consistently good and very competent leadership and management of the school and has a clear vision for what needs to be improved. This is due, in no small part, to the good quality programme of school selfevaluation. It is well structured and gathers sufficient information upon which to make judgements for future development. To this end, he involves all staff in a collegiate approach to management. This results in good teamwork and ensures that all stakeholders are valued as part of the team. Teachers with oversight of areas of the curriculum fulfil their roles well. As a result, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards and progress have improved, as has the quality of teaching and learning. Detailed and regular tracking of pupils' progress shows that pupils are achieving well, but equally highlights where further improvements need to be made. As a result, a number of initiatives are being taken on by the school in order to improve further. The curriculum is being developed, placing an emphasis on the development of skills. Writing and mathematics are both the subject of strategies for improvement. While the headteacher monitors teaching regularly, written evaluation does not always point out where further improvements might be made, to raise the quality of teaching even more. The school makes good use of its links with other schools in order to develop the curriculum and further improve aspects of learning. The governing body is supportive and is involved in the school's development. While it monitors work in a range of subjects through its programme of visits, it does not monitor closely enough the priorities of the school's development plan in order to check the school's progress on a range of issues.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 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/or disabilities make progress | 2 |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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 |

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 eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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**

8 November 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Five Ashes C of E Primary School, Mayfield, TN20 6HY Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome when we visited your school. We were pleased to see how happy you were at school and how much you enjoyed being there. It was good to be able to talk to quite a lot of you and gather views on your school. You explained your thoughts and ideas very clearly. Five Ashes is a good school. You and your parents know this to be the case. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and are taught well in all classes. Because of this and your own good attitudes to your work, you make good progress and achieve well. The school is currently developing the curriculum, especially in mathematics in the infant class and in writing in the rest of the school. We know how much you are enjoying your 'Big Write' opportunities. You are looked after well by your teachers and this makes you feel safe in school. Your parents agree and are often surprised by how many different activities you are offered both in and out of school. Those of you who need extra help with your work receive it and as a result, you too make good progress. We have asked teachers who teach the youngest children to try to give them more opportunities to carry out activities of their own choosing. At the same time, we have asked Mr Wickens, when he comes into classes and looks at how teachers are working, to give them tips on how they too might make their teaching even better than it is already. You too can play your part by continuing to work hard, attend school as often as possible and try even harder with your writing. Thank you again for making our day at your school so interesting. Yours faithfully Gavin Jones Lead inspector