

Four Elms Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118275
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312863
Inspection dates	31 October –1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Ellis HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Wendy Fox
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Bough Beech Road Four Elms Edenbridge TN8 6NE
Telephone number	01732 700274
Fax number	01732 700221

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Four Elms is a popular school that is much smaller than average and serves a rural area close to Edenbridge in Kent. Pupils attend from several surrounding villages, with the majority coming from Edenbridge. Almost all the pupils are of White British origin and none is at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average and the number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes except for lessons in mathematics and English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This improving school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress through the school and standards achieved are in line with the national average, except in science, where standards are too low. Pupils are proud of their school and take good care of it. Behaviour is very good, adults act as good role models and relationships at all levels are good. Pupils are happy in school, as shown by their superb attendance, confidence and self-esteem.

Teaching is satisfactory overall but, although the quality of teaching is improving, not enough teaching is good or better. Work is planned well and assessment is accurate but marking, particularly of older pupils' work, does not always provide sufficiently detailed advice on how the work could be improved or developed. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons but that 'sometimes the teachers could make learning more exciting'. The school provides a rich and varied curriculum, with plenty of extras to engage and challenge pupils.

Good attention is paid to ensuring that pupils are safe and provided with good opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles. The good range of play equipment and other outside facilities that pupils enjoy at break times enhances their physical development. Parents are positive about the care and support that the school provides and most feel that their children make the progress that they should. The school council provides pupils with an active voice in how the school develops and pupils speak positively about the opportunities they have to contribute to the school and the wider community. Their good all-round personal development and positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their learning.

The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and is strongly committed to its improvement. She is well supported by an enthusiastic staff and effective governors. The senior leadership has accurately identified the areas requiring improvement and consulted widely before taking action. Strengths, such as those in the Foundation Stage, are being built on effectively. The actions taken have had a good impact in improving the quality of education and the standards the pupils achieve. Subject coordinators are developing their role in monitoring pupils' performance and guiding colleagues, but this is not yet consistent across all subjects as some coordinators have only been in post for a relatively short time. Finances are closely monitored and spending is clearly linked to priorities in the school's improvement plan. The school is in a good position to move forward and build on the many improvements already made.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Reception class is good. Children join with standards that are slightly below average and make good progress in acquiring a wide range of knowledge and skills so that most reach or exceed the standards expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1. They do particularly well in understanding of the world and creative and physical development, while progress is less marked in their development of language for communication and thinking. Good teamwork between the teacher and other adults enables children to enjoy learning in both the classroom and outdoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop subject leadership to raise achievement.
- Achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that more teaching is good or better.
- Develop the marking and assessment of older pupils' work to provide better advice on how they can improve or develop their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start school with standards that are slightly below those expected but make good progress in Reception and satisfactory progress elsewhere, so that by the end of Key Stage 2 most are achieving the standards expected for their ages. In the 2007 national tests, pupils in Year 6 achieved well in English and mathematics but significantly less well in science.

Recent improvements in assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress enable teachers to give pupils better targeted support and guidance, which is raising standards. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the support they receive is closely matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well both in class and around the school, and there are good relationships between pupils and the adults who care for them. They say that they feel safe and most demonstrate that they much enjoy school by having excellent attendance and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils know a lot about the importance of healthy eating and exercise, and of how to keep safe. They make a good contribution to the community, for instance, as members of the school council and in raising money for charity. They are confident in giving their opinions on how to improve the school and feel that their views and opinions are valued. Older pupils are confident and assist younger ones and they work well together in pairs or groups. Pupils' development of the skills needed in later life, such as information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and numeracy, is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have good opportunities to develop an understanding of the range of cultures and different faiths present in British society and the school has good active links with a school in Africa.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and improving and there are significant strengths in the Foundation Stage. Work across the school is increasingly planned well to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and stages of development. In lessons, adults explain the learning objectives carefully and ensure that pupils understand what they have to do and how they will know they are successful. Assessment provides an accurate picture of what pupils know and understand, and teachers track the progress that pupils make so that they can identify when further intervention is required. Teachers provide good oral feedback to pupils in lessons. Marking of written work is satisfactory, but it does not always show older pupils how their work could be improved or developed. Although lessons often start well, the pace sometimes slows so that

pupils are not sufficiently challenged, particularly the most able, and pupils do not achieve as much as they should. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well so that they are able to make similar, and in some cases better, progress to other children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of activities and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage develops the full range of skills and knowledge children need to acquire. Good links are being made between different subjects and the school is developing strategies to ensure that the curriculum and resources are successfully adapted to take account of the specific needs of individual children. Good use is made of visiting speakers and visits to enrich the curriculum. A variety of good, interesting and well-attended extension opportunities is offered after school, for instance, in drama, puppet making, sport and design and technology. The headteacher has identified that the range of activities needs to be developed to better meet the needs and interests of boys and is consulting with the school council to identify what additional clubs pupils would like to attend.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements to safeguard children are rigorous and effective and meet current requirements. Pastoral care is good and parents and pupils express confidence in the care offered. 'The school has been most welcoming and supportive' is a typical view. Induction arrangements are good, which results in children settling quickly and enjoying school. The school has effective systems to track the progress that pupils make, and the development of systems to monitor and review progress are giving class teachers greater responsibility for identifying and addressing the needs of pupils who are underachieving or at risk of underachieving. Pupils receive good academic guidance and targets are appropriate and challenging. Older pupils have a good understanding of their individual targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Marking, although satisfactory, is a weaker aspect of this guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior leaders, supported and challenged by the governors, provide good leadership. Monitoring of teaching and learning and the evaluation of data ensure that senior leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Actions taken to address key weaknesses identified by the last inspection have brought about good improvements and the potential for further improvement is good.

Good, productive partnerships have been developed with parents, local schools, community groups and external agencies to support pupils' learning. Most parents are supportive of the school but a small minority who have children in Key Stage 2 do not think that their children make as much progress as they should. The school acknowledges that in the past there had been some underachievement, but this has been addressed and inspection evidence shows that pupils now make satisfactory progress. The good management of provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensure that they make the progress that they should.

Subject leadership has recently been restructured, which has led to improved accountability and is leading to improvements in achievement and standards. However, some co-ordinators are recent appointments. The school recognises that their development continues to be a priority and is providing staff with good professional development opportunities.

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Annex A

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
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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	3

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?	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

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	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

November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Four Elms Primary School, Four Elms, Kent TN8 6NE

Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for helping me with the inspection, and a special thank you to the school council and those of you who took time to speak to me about your school and the work that you were doing. I particularly enjoyed watching you making puppets in an after-school club and playing so well together at break time.

Some of the things that the school does are good and some things could be a little better, so I have given the school a satisfactory grade.

I saw how well you behave and how well you look after each other and your school. You told me that you like being at school and feel safe and well looked after. You said that you like eating healthy food, particularly fruit, and enjoy the opportunities you get to take exercise and use the outside play equipment. Most of you are very keen to learn and this helps you make satisfactory progress. Some of you work even harder and make good progress.

The people who have responsibility for making decisions about your school know it very well and have many good ideas about how it can be made even better.

I think the main things that the school needs to do are to:

- develop the links between the subjects you study to help you learn more
- make lessons even more interesting and challenging so that you can all learn as well as possible
- give you even better advice on how you can improve your work.

You can help by supporting your teachers and always trying to do your best.

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and look forward to hearing about your future successes.

Robert Ellis Her Majesty's Inspector