

# Ryarsh Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118310
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	312880
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Collard

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	152
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rachel Rowland
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary Priestley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 September 2004
<b>School address</b>	Birling Road Ryarsh West Malling ME19 5LS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 870600
<b>Fax number</b>	01732 870600

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

determining whether the achievement of pupils is good throughout the school

establishing whether the personal development of pupils is as strong as the provision suggests in the school's self-evaluation; and

establishing whether the right actions are being taken at all levels of leadership to ensure the continuing success of the school.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, interviews with the headteacher, senior leadership team and chair of governors, and discussions with pupils and staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but no evidence was found to suggest that the school's own self-assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller-than-average village school serving its local community. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than that of similar schools. Most year groups are taught for part, although not all, of the day in mixed-age classes. The vast majority of pupils are of White British ethnicity and all pupils can communicate well in English. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006 and the deputy headteacher in 2007.

## 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. There are a number of particularly strong and outstanding features. These include the excellent personal development of pupils, which has come about through the outstanding pastoral care and the extremely high quality of leadership and management. As one prospective parent put it after being shown round the school by some Year 6 pupils, 'If my son turns out like those two boys I'd be very proud.' As importantly, the school is rightly tackling those priorities that will ensure that the academic progress of pupils is at the same high level as that in personal development. The relatively new headteacher, in conjunction with the able support of the leadership team, has provided a very strong and clear direction that is proving very successful in improving both the provision and pupils' outcomes.

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. For a number of years, pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 had attained standards above those expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. However, this was only part of the story. When these pupils started school, most had above-average skills and knowledge, and so this represented only satisfactory progress from their starting points. In fact, national data indicate that in English tests in 2005 and 2006, progress between Year 2 and 6 was significantly below that nationally. In the main, this was because not all those capable of achieving higher grades were doing so. Since 2007 the position has changed. The much-improved use of assessments to track progress, the identification of those who could do better and the very well-targeted support have meant that progress rates are steadily improving and are on track to improve further this year. As the excellent self-evaluation notes, eliminating the 'legacy of underachievement' is the primary objective of the school. Internal data also indicate that within each year group, pupils are now making at least the expected progress, with a significant and growing proportion doing better than this. While not fully resolved, the good achievement of pupils means that the school is well on the way to fulfilling its goal.

A key factor in the better achievement is the good quality of teaching, some of which is outstanding so that all pupils learn well and the good curriculum offered. Lessons are planned well, move at a brisk pace and are interesting and stimulating. Activities are thought through well, with various methods used to excite interest. Good support is provided to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. On just a few occasions learning slows a little because pupils are not fully engaged in what they are doing or are not sure of what to do next. In contrast, what has particularly improved is that work is now more closely matched to pupils' needs and provides more of them with greater challenge. Even so, some older pupils mentioned that, while they generally enjoy school and the subjects they study, the work is sometimes too easy because their needs have not been assessed well enough. The leadership team has increasingly targeted these pupils by trying to adapt learning. For example, in a scrutiny of pupils' books, it was seen that work is matched very well to individual pupils. This has come about through comprehensive analysis of how well pupils are progressing and discussions with both teachers and the pupils themselves about what should happen next. All this is helping pupils to take charge of their own learning and is preparing them well for their next stage of education.

Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is excellent. Relationships are strong and older pupils relish taking on new roles. The leadership team has rightly developed a strong system of learning to demonstrate that with privilege comes responsibility. Many ways are being devised to provide pupils with increasing opportunities to learn this valuable life skill. For example,

under the watchful eye of adults, older pupils are 'in charge' of taking phone calls at lunchtime. They follow written instructions and are learning how to be polite and helpful and how to deal sensibly and maturely with adults. When asked, they said they were extremely proud of this responsibility. Pupils have an excellent understanding about how to stay safe and healthy. They put on sun hats without being asked, play carefully and considerately in the playground and are fully aware about how important physical activity and good food are. Many try to walk to school as often as possible and school councillors run a regular fruit stall. The school is said by a significant number of parents to be at the heart of the community and the highly effective contribution that pupils make is central to this. Pupils are involved in organising their own collections for charities, such as a sponsored silence to support a child in Uganda, and helping a local hospice and senior citizens by entertaining the residents. While the vast majority of parents fully support all the school offers in striving to produce the highest possible standards of personal and academic endeavour, a small minority of parents feel the school does not communicate well with them; the school is trying to address their concerns.

School improvement plans are rigorous and well founded, being based on an extremely thorough analysis of the school's true position. This has resulted in a restructuring of responsibilities and better monitoring at all levels of leadership. The school's own monitoring shows that improvements in teaching, the curriculum and in overall provision have been consistently developing and the difference this has made to the pupils. The excellent governing body has also been instrumental in helping drive forward the reform of policies and systems and has kept a watchful eye on improvements. They have the knowledge to support or challenge the school's leadership when it is necessary, and from the evaluation provided by the headteacher, have a clear view of forward planning. All these improvements, along with the better progress rates of pupils and the maintenance of those areas considered to be strong at the last inspection, indicate that the school has an excellent capacity to continue its development.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision is good, including the leadership and teaching, ensuring that pupils end the Reception year attaining standards above those expected in the nationally recognised Early Learning Goals, particularly in communication, numeracy and personal and social development. There are also some children who are already working at levels expected in Year 1. In this small school the innovative use of teachers means that the youngest children have opportunities for working both with their own year group and older pupils. This provides a good balance to use play as well as formalising their studies as and when they are ready. Assistants are used very well to support different activity areas in the classroom and regular assessments mean that work can be tailored to individual need. Children enjoy each other's company and play very well with each other. They are enthusiastic learners and soak up every opportunity to broaden their horizons. On a few occasions, the various activities such as for role play and writing could have closer links to the theme being pursued so that the children can see a real purpose and realise the connections that can be made between various study areas.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all pupils are challenged at the highest level so that they realise their full potential and thoroughly enjoy school.

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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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

15 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ryarsh Primary School, West Malling ME19 5LS

Thank you for looking after me so well during my recent visit. I very much enjoyed meeting you all and seeing you at work and play. I hope those of you in Year 6 who were taking SATs tests do as well as you expected to – or perhaps even better. I am sure you will not be surprised to know that I have said yours is a good school. As I promised some of you, I have included the main points of my report below.

- You told me that you thought behaviour was very good. I have said it is excellent. I enjoyed watching you all get on so very well together and how you are helping each other. You also clearly understand how to stay safe and healthy – I like the sun hats that you are sensibly wearing. This will stop you getting sunburnt.
- Many of you are reaching above-average standards by the time you leave in Year 6 and are prepared well for your next school. You get off to a good start in the Reception class and this good progress continues as you move up into each new year group. This is because you are taught well. I can see this from the work you have done and by the information that the school has collected about your progress each term. In fact, this shows that many of you are making more progress that might be expected.
- Great care is taken to make sure you are looked after. This is why I have said your personal development is excellent.
- Your headteacher, along with the rest of the staff, is working very hard to make sure you are all doing as well as you should and this has already made a difference. I have asked your school to carry on with this. It is also the reason why some of you have noticed changes, some of which you told me about. You can help with this continued improvement by making sure you take your responsibilities seriously, and by letting everyone know just how good your school is.

Finally, I wish you all the best for the future. Keep working hard!

Best wishes

David Collard Lead inspector