

# White Cliffs Primary College for the Arts

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118395
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	312918
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

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	131
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Peall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Knight-Fotheringham
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 January 2003
<b>School address</b>	St Radigund's Road Dover CT17 0LB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 206174
<b>Fax number</b>	01304 214505

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Formerly known as St Radigund's Community Primary, the school has been through a radical reorganisation so that it is, for all practical purposes, a new school. It has been substantially refurbished. It has a new name, new governors and all of the teaching staff were appointed in 2006 or 2007. In January 2007, the school federated with Astor College, a nearby secondary school, as part of the Dover Federation for the Arts. The federation's governing body is responsible for all of the schools within it. Astor's principal is executive headteacher of the federation. White Cliff's head of college was appointed in April 2007. Although it is organised in seven single-age classes, the school is smaller than average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is more than twice the national average. There are particularly high numbers of pupils with dyslexia and behavioural and emotional difficulties. A high proportion of the pupils come from socio-economically deprived backgrounds. The school has been part of national and local authority initiatives aimed at raising standards. The school's federation with Astor means that it shares that school's arts specialism. In addition, it now provides a wide range of extended services, including on-site medical, social work and internet café facilities for families.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The transformation in this school has been remarkable. Leaders have succeeded in taking a school that was widely regarded as having failed its children, and have turned it into a good school where pupils now make good progress. Pupils and their parents recognise the enormous improvements that have been wrought over the past year. Several wrote to say that they 'would not have thought it possible' and that the school now 'exceeded our expectations'. 'It is now', as one parent commented, 'a safe, secure and happy environment that my child cannot wait to go to every day.'

This exceptional recent improvement is evident in the improved quality of education and the very much better progress that the pupils are now making. The good teaching draws well on specialist expertise from Astor College to enhance provision and broaden pupils' experiences. Study support managers in each class have a strong focus on helping pupils to learn. As a result, and thanks to the positive impact of national and local authority initiatives to raise standards, pupils are rapidly making up ground lost due to the legacy of past underachievement. In turn, standards are improving. Though still very low, results in the Year 6 tests in 2007 were a significant improvement on previous years. Current work shows that the school is on track to achieve its ambitious but realistic targets for the coming year, which would put standards much closer to the national average. Parents, again, confirm this improvement. One said that children have 'made more progress in four months than they did over the whole previous year'. They are pleased that their children are now generally 'working at the levels they should for their ages'. Though they are a very recent innovation, pupils now have and are beginning to refer to their individual targets. The guidance they receive through marking, however, varies quite widely in quality. Some marking clearly identifies for pupils what they need to do to improve their work but some is merely ticked to show that work has been completed.

Better progress has also followed from school leaders' success in creating a positive, disciplined climate for learning. This has been achieved through the very strong arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare in a school where all are made to feel valued. The extended provision for families is not only boosting children's aspirations, confidence and self-esteem but is also helping to raise that of their parents, with many now talking about grammar school and higher education options for the future. From the start of the Foundation Stage, children now quickly learn orderly routines so that they settle to work without fuss. Whereas, in the past, lessons were frequently disrupted by poor behaviour, pupils now behave and get on well with each other. They greatly enjoy their lessons, thanks to the imaginative and exciting links made between subjects and the emphasis placed on practical activities. They work with improved concentration, and generally listen well to their teachers. However, their speaking and listening skills remain weak and they do not always listen quite so carefully to each other's contributions in lessons.

The school has come a long way in a short time. The impressive turnaround over the past year shows its outstanding capacity for continued improvements within the federation.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children are helped to quickly settle to school life in the Reception class. They make very good progress so that, by the end of the year, most meet and some exceed the goals set for children of their age, despite their very low starting points. This is due to the good teaching and support

that the children and their families receive. A parent particularly praised the way staff 'take the time to tell me how my daughter is doing and how I can help her at home'. Some with older children contrasted the Reception Year now with the way it was in the past, explaining, 'School is made fun but there is a lot more control now.' Children make particularly good progress in their social development, so that they share and work well together. Parents point also to the rapid gains in children's language and writing. One parent described how, when she started, her daughter 'couldn't and didn't want to write her name', but that now 'she can write her name and knows lots of three-letter words'. Facilities for the Foundation Stage are mostly good, but the outdoor area is comparatively grim. Refurbishment is planned but has yet to happen.

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

- Ensure that all marking gives pupils clear feedback on what they need to do to improve their work.
- Give pupils more opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills so that they listen as well to each other's contributions in lessons as they do to their teachers'.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards have been exceptionally low but they have improved sharply. In 2006, the Year 6 test results were among the worst in the country. They were much better in 2007, but still way below those of most other schools. The school's recent success as a partner in the federation is evident in the progress that pupils are now making in all years. With much more positive attitudes to learning, improved attendance, and more effective teaching and support, current pupils are rapidly catching up on lost ground, so that standards have risen. Though still below the national average, they are now much closer to it than in previous years. The small class sizes and high level of adult support in most year groups enable dyslexic pupils and those with emotional difficulties to be given high quality support in lessons. As a result, they too make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and the recent improvements in lessons, resources and their environment. They are proud of their school and say that it is a much better place since joining the federation. Whereas, in the past, squabbles and even fights were commonplace, pupils now get on well with each other, describing school as 'a big family' and observing, philosophically, 'We are better off together than apart.' Pupils say that bullying is now less common and that it is dealt with effectively. The change in pupils' behaviour is shown in the very marked fall in the number of exclusions. Pupils' attitudes to learning are also now good. Pupils are engaged and involved in their learning because of the interesting variety of challenging work they are given. They are increasingly keen to do well and their enthusiasm for school is evident not only in their positive comments but also in their greatly improved attendance. This has gone from well below average to slightly above average this year. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and the other adults in the school but, in lessons, they do not always listen quite so well to each other.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, a visiting theatre group dramatically ensured that pupils had a good understanding of the importance

road safety. Pupils speak knowledgeably about the need for exercise and a healthy diet, and they make a sound contribution to the community, with school council members keenly contributing ideas to help take the school further forward. Pupils' good progress in developing key literacy and numeracy skills and their good personal development are preparing them well for their future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

A new and dedicated team of teachers and study support managers have succeeded in transforming behaviour and raising standards. Teachers plan exciting, interesting and often practical activities where pupils are encouraged to get involved in their own learning. Relationships are good. The high number of adults in the mostly small classes helps to make it possible for those pupils who need extra help to get it in lessons. This means that they do not have to be withdrawn for support and so are fully included in lessons. Systems to track pupils' progress are robust and teachers are confident in accurately assessing pupils' work. Assessment information is used well to plan work that is at the right level of difficulty for different pupils and helps them to build on what they have previously learnt. However, teachers do not always give pupils enough guidance through marking or in lessons about how they can take the next steps in their learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The investment in refurbishing and re-equipping the school has helped to raise pupils' self-esteem. It has also greatly broadened the range of activities that pupils can undertake. Pupils explain, for example, that last year, in art, they could only draw because they had no paint. Now pupils have the opportunity to use a wide range of materials, including fabric, printing and ceramics. The school is able to draw on resources and expertise from its federation partners, so, for example, older pupils visit the secondary school regularly for science lessons. This has raised their aspirations as they say that working in a laboratory makes them 'feel like real scientists'. In turn, specialist secondary teachers come into the school regularly to teach and support lessons, particularly in art. The art specialism of the federation is also used as a theme in each class to imaginatively link subjects together, so that, for example, Year 2's project on Native American art and design has been used to stimulate pupils' numeracy work on 3D shapes. Where the art specialism has had less noticeable impact is in the relatively limited range of clubs on offer.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

A notable strength of the school since its becoming part of the federation is in the extended provision and support both for pupils and their families. These are having a very positive impact in raising pupils' and parents' horizons, so that there is a shared expectation of better achievement and so better life chances, especially for those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The high quality of care and support has been an important factor in the rapid turnaround in pupils' attendance, attitudes and behaviour and in the progress they are making. When the federation was formed, every child at the school was given a new uniform, and all

wear it with pride. This has had a noticeable effect not only in school but also in the wider community, as pupils treat each other and the locality with respect.

Procedures to safeguard pupils meet current government requirements and the school pays good attention to pupils' health and safety. Although these have only recently been introduced, all pupils have targets and know the National Curriculum levels at which they are working. These are already contributing to pupils' accelerated progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The palpable changes in this school have been rapidly achieved since the establishment of the federation. The school has obviously benefited from a substantial injection of resources, enabling school leaders to generously staff and equip White Cliffs. The many improvements show the dividends being paid on this investment. The federation has also greatly increased the school's management resources, enabling it to draw on expertise that goes far beyond that available to other similar size schools.

School leaders have a sharply accurate picture of where the school is succeeding and where improvements have been needed. They have taken an uncompromising stand in pushing for change, including making staff changes which were not initially popular with parents. The enormous improvements in the climate for learning and in the quality of education provided for the pupils have been driven by rigorous monitoring and ambitious target setting. Together these have raised expectations of staff, pupils and their parents.

The success of the federation is due not only to its leadership team but also to the vision and commitment of governors. Motivated by the worry that 'children get just one shot at education', they make a major contribution to the school's success by challenging staff to ensure that pupils get the best deal possible.

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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?	1
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	3
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?	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	3
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?	1

<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	2
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	2
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of White Cliffs Primary College of Arts, Dover CT17 0LB

Thank you for making me so welcome when Mrs Hall and I came to visit your school. You and your parents told us how much better your school was since the changes last year. We could see for ourselves you were right. The federation has made a huge difference to your school. It is a good school and we were delighted to see that you are now making good progress.

This is because the federation is exceptionally well run. It has made sure that you benefit from good teaching and support. It has also helped to make the school a much happier place. We were very pleased to see how well behaved you all are and how you get on so well with each other. That is a big improvement and it is helping you to succeed. You also feel secure at school because the staff take such good care of you. The range of support services and facilities provided for you and your families is most impressive, and your parents told us what a big difference they were making.

Many of you told us how much more interesting lessons are now because you are given lots of practical things to do and because of the excellent links with Astor College. You particularly like the way art is used to help you learn in other subjects. We were pleased to see how well you listen to your teachers and the other adults in the school, but we were disappointed that you do not always listen quite so carefully to each other, for example when sharing ideas in lessons. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities to practise your speaking and listening skills to improve this.

You all have new targets and it was good to see that you know the levels at which you are working. We think it would help you make even faster progress if you all had clearer feedback through marking that showed you exactly what you need to do to do better. That is something else that we have asked the school to improve.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and do your best.

Best wishes Selwyn Ward Lead inspector

22 November 2007



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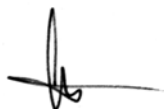
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Selwyn Ward  
Lead inspector