

Cranbrook Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118600
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313009
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bridget Veitch
Headteacher	Peter Wibroe
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Carriers Road Cranbrook TN17 3JZ
Telephone number	01580 713249
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cranbrook Church of England Primary School is average in size. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, which cover a wide range of behavioural and emotional issues as well as difficulties with basic skills like literacy and numeracy, is above average. A few Traveller children attend the school. In recent years, local circumstances have resulted in falling rolls, leading to some restructuring of provision within the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Cranbrook Primary provides a satisfactory standard of education. This is a considerable improvement on the recent past, when pupils underachieved as they moved up through the school, particularly in English. Most parents are now very positive about the school. As one parent commented, 'The school does a great job in trying to find something for everyone.' A significant minority of parents do feel that communication between the school and home could be better, but inspectors judge that parents are now better involved in their children's learning and are given more information about their progress.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, ably supported by knowledgeable and active governors, has accurately identified areas needing improvement. His actions to date have succeeded in raising standards. The school has addressed weaknesses from the previous inspection and the recent substantial underachievement. The improvement to date, the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and the fact that the drive for higher standards is taking effect mean that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

Standards in Year 6 are average and pupils' achievement is good. This is a marked improvement, given the below average performance over recent years, culminating in the 2007 national test results, which were below average, and significantly below in English. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage, which they enter with below or well below levels of skill and knowledge for their age. Good provision in Reception results in good progress. From Year 1 onwards, the great majority of pupils now make good progress. This is partly due to the major drive to improve English, in particular. Another successful initiative has been the regular progress meetings between staff and the headteacher and the introduction of regular assessments of pupils' work. These quickly identify potential underachievers and lead to extra support, so that pupils with learning difficulties share in the good progress of most other pupils. The school has below average attendance. Several of the poor attenders underachieve and are Traveller children who get no continuity in their learning, despite the school's best efforts to keep them regularly in school. Also, a few more able pupils, particularly in the 7 to 11 age range, are not consistently challenged by the work in class and could reach an even higher standard.

Although the school has been successful at driving up standards, personal development is satisfactory. There are some strengths. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is good, and pupils develop good social skills in collaborative work in lessons. Most also enjoy school, particularly after-school clubs offered through the school's good curriculum and lessons which are 'fun'. Behaviour is satisfactory. It is generally good when pupils are with their regular teachers, but less so with supply staff. There is also occasional silliness in the playground. A substantial number of children are not confident speakers and in this respect are not as well prepared for the next phase of education as they might be. Pupils feel that they are looked after well because of the good care provided by the school.

Teaching is good and now more effective in improving learning. However, marking often lacks rigour, and expectations of writing in subjects other than English are too low. The school is now adept at collecting data on progress, but some subject leaders and teachers do not yet rigorously analyse the data or use it consistently in the classroom to show pupils how to reach the next level of work. Pupils do have targets and generally know them and find them helpful.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides a good standard of education. Children join Reception with attainment that is well below the level expected for children of their age, particularly in aspects of literacy. A stimulating environment, good use of facilities such as the outdoor area, good teaching and a good balance between child-led and guided activities all combine to produce good progress. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children are of an average standard except in literacy and calculation, in which they are below average. Children also enjoy the visits and vivid displays. The Reception class is well led and managed, although transition arrangements between Reception and Year 1 are not well developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance and the attitudes towards learning of a few pupils.
- Improve the consistency of marking and the use of assessment information.
- Ensure a consistent level of challenge to increase learning opportunities for some higher attainers.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards in Years 2 and 6 are currently in line with national averages. There has been a particular improvement in writing skills. The rate of progress is fastest amongst younger pupils, who benefit from greater consistency in the quality of teaching and use of assessment. Pupils are now on track to meet challenging targets. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different ability groups, and girls' achievements are now more closely matched to those of boys. A small number of higher attainers do not achieve as well as they might because they are not set consistently challenging work. Pupils with a range of learning difficulties benefit from good support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Behaviour has improved, but the poor attendance of a few pupils and small pockets of inappropriate behaviour hold back the progress of a small minority of pupils. The majority of pupils are prepared adequately for the next phase of education. In other respects, the school successfully promotes pupils' personal development, particularly their ability to cooperate well. There are good procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils value the school council and the opportunities to help each other, for example as buddies for younger pupils. They have a good understanding of the importance of good food and exercise to a healthy lifestyle, and they enjoy contributing to the community outside school, for example through links with the church and the school's Malawi project.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has improved, and has significantly raised achievement, although there are still some inconsistencies. In most lessons, teachers provide good challenge, promote problem-solving and active learning activities, and use support staff well. Whilst there is no unsatisfactory teaching, it is occasionally less effective, when there is a lack of pace and insufficient match of work to the needs of a few more able pupils, particularly in subjects other than English. The quality of marking is inconsistent between teachers and sometimes between subjects. Whilst marking is sometimes helpfully linked to learning objectives and targets, often it gives insufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A strength of the curriculum is the range of after-school activities. Pupils are enthusiastic about these, as well as the residential visit and the good sporting and swimming opportunities. The school also makes good use of links with some local schools, for example to ensure good provision in modern foreign languages. Many parents are very complimentary about the school's inclusive character, exemplified by the strenuous efforts to make good provision for the significant minority of Traveller children, although a few higher-attaining pupils get work of a limited degree of challenge in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils generally feel safe and well supported in school. Procedures for ensuring child protection are secure. The school monitors attendance, working hard to improve it, and also liaises well with a range of support agencies to provide help for pupils who find school difficult. These often make good progress in their work and develop in confidence as a result. There is good provision for pupils with a range of learning needs. There are also systems now in place to track and monitor pupils' individual progress in their work, although there is a limited awareness of exactly how well different groups of pupils are doing. Some teachers also use the assessment information inconsistently, for example when trying to set appropriate work for groups of different abilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leadership has coped well with the difficulties created by a falling school roll and the need to reorganise classes. In the more stable situation which now exists, the headteacher, ably supported by his leadership team and governors, has been able to assess areas for development and manage change effectively. This has led to a range of initiatives to improve teaching, assessment, standards and achievement. They have begun to pay dividends, although aspects of the pupils' personal development are not as strong as their academic progress. More rigorous monitoring has helped to spread good practice, and subject leaders at all levels have been increasing their involvement in the monitoring process, so reducing some of the

inconsistencies in teaching. There are fruitful links with some other local schools, taking advantage of their expertise in particular subject areas such as modern foreign languages.

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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?	2
The standards ¹ 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?	3
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	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	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?	3

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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cranbrook Church of England Primary School, Cranbrook, TN17 3JZ

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed listening to you telling us about your education, and we also enjoyed seeing you at work in lessons and around the school.

Cranbrook Primary provides you with a satisfactory education. However, it has improved considerably in recent times. In particular, because of the hard work put in by the headteacher, your teachers and other staff, many of you are making more progress than before. We know that you like lessons in which you learn actively, and we have seen the good progress which you are making, particularly in your writing.

We agree with you that you get a good range of after-school opportunities, in sport and other activities, and we were impressed by the way you take up opportunities to help each other, whether working in groups in lessons, serving on the school council or acting as a school buddy. We also agree with you that most of the time your teachers teach you well, and that you find your targets helpful. We know that you feel safe in school.

Your behaviour has improved, although some of you could behave even better. Some of you also do not attend school regularly. These two things stop some of you doing as well at school as you should, despite your teachers' hard work.

The headteacher leads the school well and all your teachers want you to do well. We have asked the school to help you do even better in three ways. First, it should improve attendance and the behaviour of a few of you. Second, teachers should set work which helps some of the cleverest pupils get even better results, because sometimes the work is too easy for them. Third, we have asked your teachers to mark your work in such a way that you have a clearer idea on how you can improve. You can play your part by trying your hardest in class and behaving well all of the time.

Once again, thank you for your welcome and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Laver Lead inspector