

# St Helen's Church of England Primary School, Cliffe

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118641
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	313025
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Sydney

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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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	184
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	30
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Bonner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Viv Barr
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 July 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Church Street Cliffe Rochester ME3 7PU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 220246

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 November 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	313025

**Fax number**

01634 222747

<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a small village school. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Reception Year. On entry, their skills and experiences vary from year to year, but overall are typical of children of their age. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, but a significant number have speech and language difficulties. The school has gained Investor in People status and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The headteacher took up her post in April 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Its strengths lie in the good care and guidance that pupils receive, their good personal development and the creative curriculum. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school and they behave well.

Parents are supportive of the school and its recent improvements. 'It has gone from strength to strength', one said. They praise the approachable teachers and feel that they deal with any issues promptly. Good care and guidance begin before the children start in Reception, with sensitive preparation hand in hand with their pre-school settings. From their average starting points, children make good progress overall in the Reception Year, and outstanding progress in knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development. Good relationships with adults in school lead to happy and confident pupils, who treat others with consideration and feel themselves part of a community.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In this small school, standards vary from year to year depending on the number of pupils with additional learning needs in each class. The test results in Year 2 in 2008 were below the national average, but for those particular pupils this represented satisfactory progress. The unvalidated results for the Year 6 tests in 2008 show that standards are at the national average, although not enough pupils reach the higher levels in English and science. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make satisfactory progress but the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent. The new headteacher has refined the use of data and tracking to check underachievement but in some lessons, this is not used to provide enough challenge for more able pupils. Pupils with speech and language difficulties have good support but there is not enough monitoring of how effective the extra support is for all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some outstanding teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2. One pupil said, 'I love every single subject, especially drama and music lessons and maths quizzes.' The curriculum is good and includes many opportunities for creativity as well as a good range of enrichment activities. However, chances are missed to widen pupils' horizons to include other beliefs or to reflect the cultures of the small number of minority ethnic pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is well supported by the chair of governors who shares her vision. Governors keep the school within their budget and they are beginning to take a more active part in steering the school's future development. School self-evaluation is largely accurate but not enough staff and governors are involved in it. The recent rise in achievement in mathematics and the improved use of data to target underachievement signal the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. Staff assess children's abilities as soon as they arrive. Their skills and experiences are largely typical for their ages on entry, but they do better on readiness to learn, social and emotional skills, and language than in early writing or linking sounds and letters. They make good progress so that almost all are working securely within the expected goals for learning by the time they enter Year 1. However, the skills that are the basis of reading and writing are relatively weaker than other areas of their development. Children are well cared

for in Reception and all welfare requirements are met. Parents are happy that their children are safe and have made a calm start to school life. Teaching is satisfactory, with a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed work, although the outdoor area is not used for a wide enough range of activities. The strength of teaching is in the way individual needs are identified promptly and lessons planned accordingly, for example using books on dinosaurs to motivate boys to read. This and children's very good attitudes mean they make good progress and achieve well. Leadership and management of the EYFS are shared between the Reception teacher and another teacher with extensive EYFS experience. Although unusual, this provides high quality support for keen but newly qualified staff, especially in ensuring children's good achievement.

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

- Set pupils more challenging targets to increase their rates of progress.
- Ensure all teachers use data systematically to match work to pupils' individual needs, especially to stretch the more able pupils in English and science.
- Share the responsibility for rigorously monitoring the quality of learning among all school leaders.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils enter Year 1 with high attainment in their personal development, and average attainment in their early writing and reading skills. The Year 2 test results have declined in recent years but this is due to the increasing numbers of pupils with additional difficulties and/or disabilities. Compared with their starting points, pupils made satisfactory progress. Current pupils in Key Stage 1 are making good progress because of the consistently good and often outstanding assessment and teaching.

For some years, the results in Key Stage 2 have been below the national average, particularly in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, the unvalidated test results for 2008 show that pupils reached average standards in English, science and mathematics, which represented satisfactory achievement for these pupils. As a result of improved teaching and extra support, the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in mathematics has improved so that it is now on a par with the national average. In English and science, not enough pupils reach the higher levels because the teaching does not always challenge them.

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

### **Grade: 2**

There is a strong Christian ethos in the school. Pupils support each other well and have a clear sense of right and wrong. Their spiritual development is fostered well through assemblies and local church links. Pupils' behaviour is good: they are friendly and helpful, making good relationships with children and adults alike. They enjoy coming to school but attendance is only satisfactory because too many pupils take holidays in term time. Pupils speak enthusiastically about music, drama and visits, for example to the Tutankhamen exhibition. Although they learn about other cultures and religions in lessons and through visitors to the school, they are not fully prepared for the rich diversity of British life. They learn to lead safe

and active lives and are involved in sporting links with other schools and the local community. Even the youngest pupils enjoy taking responsibility, while older pupils are being trained as play leaders to support younger ones. Pupils feel their views are listened to. The academic standards they reach prepare pupils satisfactorily for their next stage of life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Although some teaching is outstanding and none is unsatisfactory, it is inconsistent in its quality. In some lessons, teachers use data on pupils' progress well to plan resources, activities and support for different ability groups. Their teaching is lively and their enthusiasm infectious, for example using technology to illustrate and provide sound effects to enhance a Greek myth, or writing instructions for 'How to wash a sheep'. Pupils respond with imagination and all of them make good progress when lessons are of this quality. Careful questioning includes pupils with speech and language difficulties and teaching assistants give good support. Pupils evaluate for themselves how well they have learned during a lesson. Teachers use written and verbal comments effectively to help pupils improve. Where learning is less effective, the pace of a lesson is slow, especially for the higher attainers. Some teachers do not use the data available to them to plan a lesson that is challenging for everyone. There is sometimes too much teacher direction and not enough opportunity for reflection or independent learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Learning based on topics and the introduction of regular drama, music and dance lessons have increased pupils' enjoyment of lessons. It is beginning to lead to some noticeable benefits. For example, Year 3 pupils thoroughly enjoyed being Roman soldiers, while Year 5 pupils imaginatively translated their learning in English about Theseus into dance. These activities result in increased self-confidence, more informed, imaginative writing and better use of language. The new topics are also helping to develop skills such as problem solving across subjects. Many pupils participate in a variety of activities outside lessons, especially sports with help from a local secondary school. Enrichment is good, with a range of trips, visits and visitors, as well as extra support through booster groups. The school provides well for talented pupils, but not necessarily for academically gifted ones. Despite its rural setting, there is little in the curriculum about the environment and not enough about the rich mix of cultures in Britain.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

Both parents and pupils regard this as a caring school. One parent said of her child, 'He feels part of the school rather than a number passing through it.' The support for vulnerable pupils, pupils with additional needs and those experiencing emotional difficulties, as well as their families, is good. A school counsellor is available and the personal, social and health education programme is effective. Relationships are good so that in a Year 2 literacy lesson about 'Memories', pupils felt comfortable asking the teaching assistant about grandparents and bereavement. Child protection procedures are secure. Academic guidance is good and pupils with speech and language difficulties have precise targets and a specialist programme. All pupils understand their targets for improvement and appreciate individual conversations with their

teachers. However, the different approaches used by staff to pupils' academic guidance affect continuity as they change class.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

One parent commented, 'The new headteacher has brought a new level of dynamic vigour to the school.' Tracking systems have been refined in English and mathematics and the school's improvement planning identifies most of the important priorities for development. However, achievement targets lack sufficient challenge as pupils are only expected to make a modest improvement each year. The monitoring of lessons has mostly been undertaken by the headteacher and there has been little sharing of responsibility among all the staff. Where subject leaders have taken on a monitoring role, for example in mathematics, performance has improved. The governors are becoming more informed and involved. Community cohesion is satisfactory. While the school is a focus for the local community, it is now exploring links further afield to let pupils experience other communities. Through its recent improvements, St Helen's has shown it has satisfactory capacity to improve further.



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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	3

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	3
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**

7 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Helen's Church of England Primary School, Rochester, ME3 7PU

You may remember that two inspectors came into your school recently. Thank you for telling us about your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work. I am writing to tell you what we found.

You go to a satisfactory school that is happy and caring. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and you feel safe. The rules are clear and people behave well. If anyone is worried, there is an adult who will listen. You really enjoy dance, drama and music, maths quizzes, sports and trips. When we saw you in class, most of you worked hard and you knew what you needed to do to improve your work.

- You make steady progress in learning new things because your teachers work hard to help you to learn. By the time you leave St Helen's, many of you are likely to reach the level you are expected to get to. We would like even more of you to achieve higher levels, especially in English and science. Your headteacher and all the other adults are keen to improve the school. We have asked them to do three things to make the school better:
  - give you more challenging targets to ensure you make even faster progress
  - make sure the work is not too easy for some pupils, especially in English and science
  - ensure that more staff check how well you are learning

Please work really hard for your teachers so that St Helen's can become even better!

Very best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Ann Sydney Lead inspector