

Chilham, St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118665
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313036
Inspection date	4 June 2008
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Bartley
Headteacher	Kelly Ann Brooks
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	School Hill Chilham Canterbury CT4 8DE
Telephone number	01227 730442
Fax number	01227 732398

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	4 June 2008
Inspection number	313036

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves three villages and an extensive rural area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A substantial minority of pupils are of Gypsy/Roma heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, covering a wide range of differing needs. The movement of pupils into and out of the school each year is higher than in many other schools. The headteacher joined the school in January 2006. In recent years, the school has experienced a high level of instability in staffing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Chilham St Mary's provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has a number of strengths. Parents rightly value the good quality of care, guidance and support. One said, 'Pastoral care is excellent, discipline is very good and there is a strong community spirit.' As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. Their personal development and well-being are good. Parents recognise the success of the school's efforts to improve behaviour, resulting in consistently good behaviour. Pupils feel that they are safe and can rely on adults to help them. Strong links with the church and the local community contribute well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good procedures to improve attendance mean that it is now close to the national average.

Although in most years children enter Reception with skills below those expected for their ages, they invariably get a good start. They make good progress, but do not reach the expected level by the time they enter Year 1. Achievement in Years 1 to 6 has been fragmented in the last two years because of the discontinuities caused by staff absence. Standards at Years 2 and 6 are, overall, below average. Writing skills in particular have suffered. However, in the last two terms, there has been greater stability and the pace of learning is accelerating, with more rigorous assessment and an effective tracking system to measure progress. Standards in writing have recovered, especially in Years 4 and 6, as a result of recent intensive input. However, although achievement is currently satisfactory – and occasionally good – there is still a legacy of underperformance, particularly among the older pupils. Standards in science and mathematics appear to be lower this year than in 2007. Teaching is satisfactory. However, there is an over-reliance on worksheets, which constrain pupils' independence, and planning does not always ensure that pupils are challenged enough.

The headteacher provides effective leadership. She has a clear vision for improvement and her evaluation of the school's needs is incisive and accurate, identifying exactly what is needed to move the school on. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. Staff have willingly embraced change and are working hard to meet higher expectations. They make increasingly effective use of pupils' individual targets for learning to increase progress. At other levels, leadership and management remain satisfactory because not all subject leaders are sufficiently focused on evaluating and raising standards in their subjects. This results largely from the recent high level of staff change and absence and the inevitable reallocation of responsibilities. Governors, however, are effective and hold school leaders to account. Implementation of a system for checking pupils' progress has been a key development, alerting staff to underperformance. While the curriculum is satisfactory, not enough attention is given to promoting literacy skills through writing in other subjects. However, pupils support the good extra-curricular provision well. The school is strongly committed to inclusion and provision for pupils who need additional support is good. The school works very successfully with its Gypsy/Roma pupils, who attend school much more frequently than in many other schools. Almost all make steady progress and several are working close to the expected level for their age.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

In most years, children enter Reception with skills that are well below the level expected. This year, exceptionally, their skills were broadly average on entry. Whatever their starting point, children are cared for well and benefit from a broad curriculum that provides a variety of

engaging experiences to extend their understanding. The transition from pre-school is skilfully managed, ensuring that children settle in quickly. The small class size facilitates a high level of interaction with adults. Relationships are a strength, enabling children to make particularly good gains in their personal and social development. They relate confidently to each other. Children show good attitudes, initiate activities independently and sustain good levels of concentration. Good teaching, underpinned by rigorous assessment and planning, ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning, and particularly in their mathematical skills. The current focus on the shapes and sounds of letters is ensuring more rapid progress in language but the school recognises that this good practice is not fully embedded. Children are now making better use of the restricted, but recently redeveloped, outdoor play area and of the rich natural surroundings.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers have high expectations of pupils' writing and of their work in mathematics and science, and that they plan activities which provide sufficient challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Ensure that subject leaders are more accountable for quality and standards in their areas of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although likely to be significantly stronger for the current Reception children, attainment on entry to Year 1 in recent years has been below average overall, particularly in literacy and communication skills. While still satisfactory overall, achievement in Years 1 to 6 has been adversely affected by frequent changes in staffing. As a result, standards have remained below average in the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests. However, greater stability this year, an intensive focus on writing and more rigorous checking on pupils' progress have produced significant improvements, with raised standards in writing at Year 2 and much improved, and now broadly average, standards in English at Year 6. Nevertheless, pockets of underachievement remain and there is still some unevenness in pupils' progress and standards. While girls continue to outperform boys, effective action is beginning to reduce the gap, although more boys than girls tend to have additional learning and social needs. Pupils who need additional support often achieve well because of the good support they receive. Regular attendance and parental commitment ensure that pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage achieve at least satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel secure and say that bullying is rare. One parent acknowledged that 'children's well-being is paramount here'. Pupils are assured, behave well and conduct themselves safely. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy, supported by good opportunities for physical exercise. Close community links and involvement in village events support social development well, while the strong partnership with the church promotes good spiritual development. Surrounded by historic buildings, pupils have good opportunities to appreciate the indigenous culture. However, their engagement with the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary Britain is not as strong. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is satisfactory. Pupils contribute well to the school community through the active school council and other posts of responsibility, such as playground 'buddies'. However, while pupils' good personal qualities

and their fundraising efforts contribute positively to their future economic well-being, their underlying basic skills are not developed with sufficient consistency.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While staff absence has seriously affected the pace of improvement, more consistent approaches to assessment and evaluation and effective monitoring ensure that teaching is typically at least satisfactory. Relationships are good, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and the environment for learning is stimulating. Teaching assistants give good support to individuals who need additional help. However, tasks do not provide sufficient challenge to move learning on briskly. Excessive use of worksheets constrains the development of pupils' independent recording skills and the quality of their learning. While work is marked regularly, often providing good guidance for development, not enough attention is given to the quality and rigour of presentation. As a result, while teaching has good aspects, it does not ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in Years 1 to 6 has been partly reviewed. The school devotes a significant amount of time to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. However, there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Provision for physical education is good. The school is well resourced for the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum for pupils who require additional support, including those from a Gypsy/Roma background, is appropriately focused on what they most need to learn. The provision for extra-curricular and enrichment activities is good, with a wide range of well-supported activities. The needs of academically gifted pupils are increasingly well provided for, primarily through access to activities, such as a science week or problem-solving in mathematics, organised by groups of local schools. A residential visit in Years 5 and 6 enhances pupils' personal development well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is a strength. The school has a close partnership with parents from the time a child enters Reception. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Staff know individual pupils well and ensure that their welfare needs are met effectively. The bond of trust between the school and the families of Gypsy/Roma pupils is a key reason why their attendance is so much higher than is normally found. The school has good links with external agencies. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. Individual targets have been introduced in literacy and numeracy. However, these are relatively recent developments and their impact on standards in writing has been greater than in mathematics. Older pupils are becoming confident in evaluating their progress towards identified goals. The school is working to ensure that teachers' marking provides consistent guidance to help them move forward at a faster rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher is resolutely focused on school improvement. She has an incisive grasp of the issues facing the school, although the pace of progress has been compromised by staff absence. Planning for improvement is extremely thorough and accurately identifies the actions necessary to move the school forward. Detailed tracking of pupils' progress and initiatives in, for example, writing are helping to raise standards. At present, the monitoring of teaching depends largely on the headteacher and the proportion of good teaching has steadily increased. The impact of subject leaders is variable, given multiple responsibilities in a small school and the frequency with which roles have had to change. Some are therefore recently in post and have had little time to evaluate standards or to drive through change. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Governors are well organised and committed. They recognise the need to challenge effectively, as well as support, the school's leadership. At present, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	3

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	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

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?	3
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?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Chilham St Mary's CE Primary School, Canterbury, CT4 8DE

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. It is a fascinating building in an unusual and delightful setting and we particularly liked the Tudor assembly hall. We enjoyed talking to you and could see that you are proud of your school and its place in the village community. We found that Chilham St Mary's is a satisfactory school, with several aspects that work well.

- The main things that we found are these:
- You behave well in lessons and have a mature approach to your work.
- Teaching is never less than satisfactory, with much that is good, and you are generally making steady progress across the school.
- The school makes sure that you are cared for well, and you have a good understanding of how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- The curriculum is satisfactory, with a good range of out-of-school activities.
- Those in charge of the school make sure it runs smoothly, and have coped well with all the recent staff absences.

We are asking the school to make these changes so that you do even better:

- Make sure that teachers plan activities which really make you think and that they have higher expectations of your written work and of the work you do in mathematics and science.
- Ensure that subject leaders have more direct responsibility for ensuring that standards are raised in their subjects.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

- George Logan
- Lead Inspector