

Woodchurch Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118672
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313040
Inspection date	18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alex McGrath
Headteacher	Frances Nash
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Woodchurch Ashford TN26 3QJ
Telephone number	01233 860232
Fax number	01233 860232

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Woodchurch is smaller than many other primary schools. Although it largely serves the immediate village community, its pupils come from a wider area, including Ashford. Most pupils come from White British and other White backgrounds. The proportion of pupils moving in and out of year groups is a little higher than average and one or two join the school from abroad. Very few pupils are learning to speak English for the first time. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall, but higher in some year groups.

There have been some changes to staff since the school's last inspection, particularly at senior level, and a recent building programme has improved accommodation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Woodchurch School is satisfactory. The very large majority of parents hold the school in much regard, and are well aware of the benefits of its strong pastoral care and close links with home. One parent of a child in their very first year of school wrote, 'Staff welcomed us as a family into the Woodchurch community and we always feel that there is someone available to answer questions or put our minds at rest if needed.' Another parent, of a pupil on the brink of leaving for secondary school, commented: 'Woodchurch School has enabled my daughter to feel safe and happy and enabled her to learn and develop with confidence.' Given the school's strong sense of community and its dedicated care, it is no surprise that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are well motivated. Their interest and hard work in lessons shows their enjoyment of school. The wide range of clubs and activities are particularly popular. From Reception onwards, relationships among pupils and with adults are warm and friendly and behaviour is good.

Academic achievement is satisfactory. A dip in national test results at Year 6 in 2006 caused the school to take a close look at its provision and performance. It worked hard over the next twelve months to make improvements and, as a result, brought test results back up last year. Its efforts also halted an ongoing decline in results in Year 2. Standards remain broadly average this year, but there have been some further improvements. Nevertheless, the school is well aware that there are still inconsistencies in progress across year groups and subjects and for higher attaining pupils. For example, children make good progress in Reception and satisfactory progress thereafter. In addition, while the school increased the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 in English this year, this success was not matched in mathematics and science, nor at the higher level in writing at Year 2.

Gaining a greater level of consistency in its provision and outcomes remains a key priority for the school. Improvements to teaching means that pupils' progress in lessons is never less than satisfactory. In many cases, lessons are taught well, but there is not yet enough good teaching to ensure consistently good progress over time. In general, activities provide suitable challenge. Nevertheless, tasks are not always matched as sharply as they should be to the needs of pupils, and particularly for the more able. Lesson objectives tend to focus more on activities rather than what pupils should learn, or are sometimes too broad for staff to judge small steps in progress. Marking does not always give pupils clear prompts about what they should do next to improve their work.

Assessment now has greater rigour. This information provides the school with an accurate view of its effectiveness and enables it to identify the right priorities for moving forward. The headteacher is the driving force behind improvements. She has welded a close-knit team who are gradually increasing their confidence in the use of data so that all staff can play a full part in lifting the school's academic performance to a higher level. Governors have increased their capacity for checking the school's work and acting as its 'critical friend'.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Reception is lower than it was at the last inspection, and is now below the expected level in all areas of learning. Good progress results in broadly average standards when the children enter Year 1.

Lively provision ensures that children enjoy their activities. Routines and expectations are firmly established. Children clear away briskly at the end of independent activities and settle quickly and sensibly as a whole group. They are keen to share what they have learned, as they were, for example, after their investigations of objects that float and those that sink. An initial exploration of children's ideas had acted as a valuable starting point because it identified for staff what the children already knew and where there was a need to dispel misconceptions. Well-focused discussion explored and reinforced ideas, and questions probed not only what children had seen but also why it might have happened. The outdoor area is used well for practical work, although children are not always clear about the purpose of these activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that learning objectives always identify what pupils should learn and are specific enough to assess small steps in progress.
- Make sure that lesson activities are matched sharply to pupils' needs, particularly so that they always demand more of higher attaining pupils.
- Give pupils clear prompts through marking and feedback on what they should do next to improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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: 3

The school moved quickly to tackle the fall in performance in the national tests at Year 6 two years ago. Its work resulted in a significant improvement last year. Current academic performance shows some further improvement. For example, while standards remain broadly average at both Year 2 and Year 6, standards in reading and mathematics have risen at Year 2 and in English at Year 6.

Although some pupils move on swiftly, the pace of progress is still variable for all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very few at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. As a result, achievement is no greater than satisfactory. The school has not been as successful in improving performance in some areas as it has been in others, and particularly in relation to the standards reached by higher attaining pupils. For example, increases this year at the higher Level 5 in English at Year 6 have not been matched in mathematics and science, or at Level 3 in writing at Year 2.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they like their school a lot, and particularly its additional activities that add spice and fun to learning. Indeed, there was a tremendous sense of enjoyment during a very lively performance of the samba. Although pupils express less enthusiasm for some academic subjects, they show good levels of interest and concentration in lessons. They make the most of opportunities to share ideas or plan a task with others, and need little supervision to ensure that they behave well and safely. Attendance has been average but, not content with this, the school has used its good links with local schools and with parents to discourage holidays during term time. As a result, attendance is now above average.

Pupils value the work of their school council and the contribution it makes to the school's community. Speaking to the local historical society and taking part in village and church events enables them to contribute to the wider community. Experiences of this kind also help to promote a sense of responsibility towards others that they willingly demonstrate in their 'buddy' support for younger pupils. Their ready participation in sporting activities and appreciation of the benefits of a cycling proficiency course reflect pupils' good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

While the majority of lessons are taught well, teaching is still too variable to ensure consistently good progress. In the main, pupils are clear about what they have to do. Their willing industry and interest contribute much to their learning. These qualities only flag a little when teaching sometimes loses pace or an individual is left for too long before an adult draws them back to the task.

Progress is never less than satisfactory because pupils are motivated by exciting topics, such as making their own mini-movie, and because activities have a sufficient degree of challenge. Nevertheless, tasks are not always adapted to ensure that they demand as much as they could of pupils. For example, higher attaining pupils sometimes complete similar work to others. Learning objectives are also not always focused on what pupils need to learn so that staff and pupils can evaluate what they have done and what needs to happen next.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A large majority of pupils attend the school's many extra-curricular activities. Together with its use of the local area as a ready educational resource, trips away and visitors to school, all these opportunities give pupils a rich and varied source of experiences. What better than a trip to the seaside to make children want to write about their experiences! Indeed, exciting topics are now a common feature of the English curriculum, while a greater focus on investigation has enhanced the teaching of science. There is a comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education, and pupils have regular opportunities to explore feelings and concerns. National awards recognise the school's considerable work to encourage pupils to eat healthily and take part in physical activity. School council members were able to attend the award ceremony and report back. Together with a sound foundation of basic skills, these opportunities give pupils valuable experience for use in later life. Many pupils benefit from an extensive range of additional support designed to build up basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Teaching assistants work well with these small groups, giving pupils focused individual attention. The school has started to review the effectiveness of these programmes to ensure they are fully effective and do not impinge on time given to other curriculum areas.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's academic guidance and support is much improved, but is not yet as well developed as its pastoral work. Ever mindful of pupils' well-being, the school has taken further steps to increase its liaison between home and school. For example, it has extended its support to

families and provides links with other agencies where needed. This service is also available to individual pupils so that they have someone 'special' to go to if they have any concerns. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are robust.

Assessments of pupils' progress are now thorough and frequent and enable staff to pinpoint the need for additional support and set targets. The school is maintaining improvements in this area, but some newer initiatives are not yet fully established and pupils have yet to be fully involved. This is particularly so for marking. In some cases, pupils receive clear feedback on how to improve their work, but this approach is not yet a consistent practice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher's strong leadership has generated a common sense of purpose and provided a firm lead for improvement. Having taken decisive steps to recover from a dip in academic performance, improvement is now moving on at a steady pace and the scope for further improvement is secure. Nevertheless, the school recognises that the quality of provision is not yet consistent enough for achievement to be good.

Analysis of data ensures an accurate picture of the school's strengths and shortcomings. Senior staff and subject leaders work closely with the headteacher and undertake a good range of monitoring activities, including checks on teaching and feedback to staff. These activities have already led to improvements in classroom practice. The governing body has set about creating a solid foundation from which they can offer the school greater challenge and well-informed support. They are aware they now need to look in detail at the impact of initiatives intended to increase achievement.

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	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	3

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	2
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?	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?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodchurch C of E Primary School, Ashford TN26 3QJ

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for making us so welcome. This letter is to tell you some of the things we found out while we were with you. First and foremost, yours is a satisfactory school. Many of your parents wrote to tell us how well the school cares for you, and this is true. As a result, you are happy at school. You are also interested and attentive in lessons and this helps to ensure your satisfactory progress. Indeed, some of you make good progress and staff and governors are working hard to make sure that you all achieve well all the time.

Here are some other important things about your school

- You say you like your school a lot, especially all the clubs and additional activities. There was a huge sense of enjoyment when some of you performed the samba – in fact, you seemed to be having a ball!
- There are some exciting activities in lessons and these are making writing, for example, interesting and fun.
- Staff track your progress very carefully and this helps them to give you some extra help if you need it.
- The school has done even more to increase your attendance, and to support you and your families if you have any worries or concerns.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- Make sure that staff are always clear about what they expect you to learn in lessons, especially so that they can check even your small steps of progress.
- Ensure your activities in lessons always challenge you to do the very best you can, particularly those of you who find work easy.
- Give you lots of feedback about how you can make your work better.

We hope that you continue to work as hard as you are doing now.

With very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies Lead Inspector

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Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies
Lead Inspector