

Northbourne Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118689
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313048
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	108
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Le Vaillant
Headteacher	Frances Chiverton
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Coldharbour Lane Northbourne Deal CT14 0LP
Telephone number	01304 611376

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Inspection number	313048

Fax number

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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

This small village primary school has five classes consisting of split year groups. Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been much higher than found nationally and doubled over the past three years. In some year groups, for example in Years 4 and 6 the proportion is much higher than in others and the proportion in Reception and Year 1 is closer to national. The majority have behavioural, emotional and social and/or moderate and speech, language and communication learning difficulties, visual impairment and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The school has experienced some significant staff changes including at senior leadership level in recent years. In recognition of its work on promoting healthy lifestyles, the school has received several awards. A privately run on-site nursery (Busy Bees) is seen as part of the school community. The school's major building works are due to finish in February 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Northbourne Primary School's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. It has been through some difficult times, and this has affected standards, with pupils in the older age groups of the school being most affected by staff changes. The headteacher has not been deflected from her desire for improvement and has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to achieve it. Staff and governors share her determination and improvements are being systematically put into place. Settled staffing has achieved more systematic teaching and better policy implementation and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Given these improvements, the school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Children get off to a good start in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) because provision is good. Standards in English, mathematics and science by Years 2 and 6 are broadly in line with those reached nationally. As a result of a whole-school focus on improving reading, pupils now read with confidence. This helps them access the curriculum more easily. Pupils' mathematical and scientific skills are developing well so that most achieve the standards typical for their age. While writing skills are improving, there is more work to be done to get pupils to write with more confidence and skill. Following a detailed review of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, changes made have meant their needs are more closely met and they make good progress. Teachers' good planning and use of a range of teaching methods ensure learning is interesting and fun. However, all teaching is not consistently good enough to eradicate previous gaps in pupils' learning and challenge the most able. However, a more creative and enticing curriculum helps to motivate pupils to make better progress than before. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully. They set realistic targets and make good use of assessment information. Pupils are clear about their targets and understand what they need to do to improve.

Pupils understand well how to keep healthy and safe. The school takes good pastoral and physical care of pupils who respond by behaving well and show good attitudes to their learning. They enjoy school and want to do well. These features underpin pupils' good personal development. The school takes its commitment to community cohesion seriously. Pupils are active in the local and wider communities and show a sound awareness of the global community through their links with Europe and Africa. Years 5 and 6 pupils worked with a local illustrator on a giant Boudicca model entered for the carnival. Pupils take part in numerous fund-raising events to reinforce the Christian values of caring for those less fortunate. Their shared experiences of how children celebrate Christmas in Sweden, Romania and South Africa give them an awareness of cultural diversity. A minority of parents expressed concerns about pupils' progress and recent changes in the school. Inspectors followed these up and found most of the concerns had already been tackled. A number of parents support the school by helping at clubs and listening to pupils read on a weekly basis. The school has come through a difficult period and is heading in the right direction; as one governor said, 'We are going places'.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join Reception/Year 1 class with levels of skills below those typical for their age. Relative weaknesses are seen in children's literacy and personal, social and emotional development and in aspects of their mathematical understanding. The focus on developing children's reading, writing and number skills and use of a letters and sounds programme is

beginning to lift their skills well. However, this has not yet secured good enough writing and basic number skills. Children make good progress, so that by the start of Year 1, they reach nationally expected standards for their age in most areas of learning. They exceed them in knowledge and understanding of the world, and physical and creative development. Every opportunity is used to pick up on children's interests to make learning fun and relevant. After reading 'Little Robin Redbreast', children talked about why birds find it difficult to find food in winter. They made bird seed cheese and lard cakes, and talked about the changes to the ingredients. They wrote simple poems and enjoyed going on a worm hunt outside. They were so excited when a real bird nested on the school Christmas tree. The EYFS is well led and good links with parents and local nurseries ensure children settle happily. Routines are quickly established in this safe, happy environment. A good balance of play activities and those directed by the teacher ensure children are well cared for and effectively taught. Staff work well together. They keep good records and make accurate assessments of what children can do and their progress. Staff use this information effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on pupils' writing skills, especially their spelling, punctuation, use of vocabulary and presentation of their work.
- Use the good teaching already evident in the school to make sure all lessons are taught well to help pupils catch up on previous gaps in their learning.
- Set work in lessons that challenges and extends more able pupils.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be 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

Pupils' progress is improving. Following good progress in the EYFS, pupils go on to reach average standards in reading, mathematics and science and above average standards in writing at the end of Year 2. For most, this represents satisfactory progress. Standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science in Year 6. This is an improvement on the previous year, although more able pupils do not always reach their full potential. Results have fluctuated over the last three years. This partly reflects the small year groups and variations in the numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Older year groups suffered considerable staffing disruption, which led to some gaps in their learning. To rectify pupils' weaker reading and writing skills, staff have undertaken specific training resulting in improvements in pupils' spelling and reading skills. Pupils gain an increasing understanding of how to write well and are beginning to use a wider range of vocabulary when writing in different styles. However there remain weaknesses in pupils' writing and presentation. Improved provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has resulted in their good achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and the school's Christian values are reflected around the school. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe. They are keen to win 'Punctuality Pup' and 'Attendance Ted' in celebration assemblies, which is why attendance is good and punctuality is improving. Pupils choose healthy

snacks and over half have hot school dinners. The whole school took part in 'Fish Friday' when a local fishmonger and a dietician explained the benefits of eating fish. Many enjoy the numerous sporting opportunities and competitions and the school has an Activemark in recognition of its work. A few parents expressed concerns about bullying. Pupils said that 'Anti-bullying week' and improvements to the building had made a real difference. The school council suggested a 'Friendship Stop' on the playground and buddies help out at playtime. The 'Just Different' workshop raised pupils' awareness of disabilities and links with a Ghanaian school mean they show a sound understanding of the wider world. Year 6 pupils enjoyed an 'Apprentice' style project and marketed a product and pupils are involved in fund-raising events. Pupils recycle and are working towards the silver eco award. However, their satisfactory basic skills mean they are only adequately prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The more settled staffing and regular monitoring by the school and the local authority have led to improvements in teaching and learning. However, teaching is not consistently good throughout the school which it needs to be to help pupils make up for previous 'lost ground' in their learning. A rigorous tracking system is used well to check pupils' progress and if their progress slips support is put in place to help them catch up. Strengths include good planning, making learning objectives clear, good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding, and marking and learning activities that are interesting and fun. A good example was seen when Years 4 and 5 pupils studied poetry through drama and moved about the room imagining what it would be like if they had gills. Teaching assistants contribute positively to pupils' learning especially in support of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, too frequently activities do not challenge more able pupils sufficiently and pupils are not practically involved in their learning. Lessons lack pace which means pupils find concentration hard.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The redeveloped curriculum incorporates cross-subject links and is increasingly matched to pupils' individual learning needs. While provision is good for most pupils, those who are more able are not always stretched. The stronger emphasis on more stimulating learning experiences has increased pupils' motivation to learn. Visits to the Dover and Science Museums, multicultural days, sports weeks, visitors, for example an Olympian gymnast and drama provide rich stimuli for creative writing. The more creative curriculum helps pupils to make better progress than before, though there is still more to be done to raise standards in writing. Visits from the Astro Dome and links with a local secondary school make learning in science fun. In Years 3 to 6, pupils learn Spanish and French. Pupils' personal development is enriched through a good range of extra-curricular activities. In recognition of its work, the school holds several awards including Healthy Schools award, Eco School status and a Quality Skills Mark.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding are robust. Teachers and adults respond sensitively to pupils' needs. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been reviewed and

strengthened. These improvements and strong links with external agencies make sure their needs are better met. Whilst most parents are supportive of the school's work, a minority expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour and safety. Inspectors investigated these concerns and found safety procedures and pupils' behaviour good. A challenge club has been set up to stretch and challenge the more able and gifted and talented pupils attend workshops at local schools. Good links with local secondary schools ensure a smooth transfer and contribute effectively to pupils' personal development. Pupils know their targets and say, 'The older you are, the harder they get.' They value comments made in their work to help them move on. Regular assessments and the resulting information are used well to improve lesson planning and check that pupils have work set at the right level. However, in practice, the more able are not always challenged well enough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Strong direction from the headteacher ensures that senior leaders are increasingly effective in their monitoring roles. Staff work closely together and with governors share the determination to improve the school further. The headteacher has made an accurate evaluation of what needs to be done to make improvements and she has set about this with gusto. All staff contribute to school development planning. The school's educational direction is clear with good systems in place to check its performance. Challenging targets are set and with regular monitoring of the school's work are beginning to be met. Thorough lesson planning and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress are already making a positive difference. However, there is more work to be done to help pupils 'catch up' on previous gaps in their learning, and to raise writing standards and check that more able pupils are sufficiently challenged. Governors are supportive and are making headway in how they effectively monitor the school's work. This is not yet established and so is making it difficult for them to rigorously hold the school to account for its performance. Inspectors investigated the concerns of a minority of parents regarding the school's performance, staffing and management. Inspectors confirm that their concerns have already been tackled. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to raise the quality of education on all fronts. They realise there is more work to be done to gain the full confidence of all parents.

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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?	2
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 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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**

11 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Northbourne Church of England Primary School, Deal, CT14 0LP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. This letter is a summary of what we found. You told us how much you enjoyed school and that you want to do well. We were impressed with your good behaviour and how friendly you all are. We found your school to be satisfactory. This means that it does some things well and there are other things it needs to do better. The school knows this, and is working very hard to make it better, and so it is improving quickly. Currently, you make satisfactory progress but this is also improving. This is because your teachers are checking how well you are doing and are helping you when sometimes you do not do so well.

The staff make sure it is safe in school. You told us you were very well cared for in school and we agree that you are. You know how to keep yourselves and each other safe. You know how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise. You certainly enjoy all the many sports offered and all the other exciting activities you get involved in at school. Many of you take part in school events, such as the Christmas performance. We were sorry not to be able to have a peek at it and hope you and your parents enjoyed it.

These are the things we have asked the school to improve:

- To help you build on your writing skills, especially your spelling, punctuation, use of vocabulary and presentation of your work.
- Make sure that all of your lessons are taught well to help you 'catch up' on previous gaps in your learning.
- Set work in lessons that really challenges those of you who find work easy.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and telling teachers if the work you do is too easy or too hard.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Browning Lead inspector