

Frittenden Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118701
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313052
Inspection date	13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Janet Simms

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	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Yeandale
Headteacher	Elizabeth Bradshaw
Date of previous school inspection	27 May 2004
School address	Frittenden Cranbrook TN17 2DD
Telephone number	01580 852250
Fax number	01580 852250

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage (Reception) and its improvement since the last inspection; target setting at all levels, especially whether marking and other procedures provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work; the quality of teaching and learning and their effect on achievement, especially in science; and attendance and the effects of pupils' high mobility. Evidence was gathered from: discussions with pupils, staff and governors; scrutiny of school documents and pupils' work in books, particularly science; observation of pupils in lessons and at play; and parents' views from questionnaires and at the start of the school day. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a small village primary school with a Reception class and three larger, mixed year classes for Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6. Staff changes and recruitment difficulties of late mean that the current teaching team has only stabilised very recently. An unusually high proportion of pupils enter and leave the school at points other than Reception and Year 6. A greater percentage of pupils than usual have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils make good progress academically and where their personal development is outstanding. 'Teachers are very responsive to a child's individual needs and very engaged in helping children to reach their optimal level, both educationally and socially' were the words of one parent who summed up the views of most. To quote another, 'a lovely and warm atmosphere' pervades the school, so children settle very quickly into the Reception class and make good progress in learning throughout the school. This is in stark contrast to the position at the time of the last inspection, when pupils did not begin to make the progress expected until Year 1. Parents find staff 'extremely supportive, thoughtful and caring', which creates an enjoyable atmosphere where pupils are eager to learn because of a 'very high standard of teaching and pastoral care'. Many such justified parental views describe the school eloquently.

The numbers of pupils that enter the school and their skills and experiences vary greatly year on year. The movement of pupils in and out of year groups often alters the profile of attainment considerably. The current Year 6, for instance, has only seven pupils, with 15 in Year 5, almost all girls and with a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This inevitably creates complications with class organisation, but these and recent recruitment difficulties have been resolved effectively. The standards of pupils currently in Year 2 were below average on entry, but pupils are broadly on track to match national expectations this year. This good progress has been achieved despite considerable staffing turbulence earlier in their school experience. Pupils continue to achieve well, with above average standards in Year 6, where pupils are exceeding the challenging targets set for them. A high proportion of Year 6 and of previous year groups has successfully taken the eleven-plus examination and/or examinations to enter independent schools, or to access bursaries. In some cases, this results in pupils doing less well in the Year 6 national tests than in the standard of work they have sustained in class. The school has recently used external advice to improve pupils' recognised weaker performance in science, particularly in national tests, but the impact of this advice is not yet evident. Class work in science shows Year 6 pupils working at the levels expected for their capabilities, although their progress in English and mathematics has been faster over the years.

Pupils' outstanding personal development starts early in Reception, where children already show high levels of independence at work and in play. They also interact extremely well, discussing very confidently abstract ideas such as emotions and how moods and feelings can change, a characteristic that continues and matures through the school. Pupils of all ages work and play very pleasantly together, like a 'large family, organised and led by firm but loving discipline', as one parent commented. By Year 6, pupils benefit enormously from opportunities to help with younger children's welfare and education, acting very responsibly in the role of 'teachers' for Reception at lunchtime, reading to them and reinforcing phonics learning, for instance. Strong links with the Church and participation in village events contribute to excellent social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Behaviour is outstanding. Attendance is improving and is satisfactory because of the strong position the school and its partners have promoted, for example to prevent term-time holidays. Provision such as good 'catch-up' work or individually targeted work for newcomers with gaps in learning, ensures that absentees or newly arrived pupils achieve as well as others.

Teaching is good throughout the school. Pupils appreciate their teachers highly, recognising the 'fun in learning' provided in lessons. Parents value teachers' dedicated and professional

approach to all pupils, whatever their needs. Staff are very approachable and provide parents with good information about pupils' progress. Support staff provide effective small-group work for those identified as needing help, with the result that these pupils achieve as well as others. Sharper focus on writing in science, particularly pupils' use of technical vocabulary, has improved the teaching of this subject. Target setting is a strong element of assessment and pupils understand their targets well, including those in science for older pupils. The new team is settling well and staff are working hard to ensure that issues such as achievement in science are resolved.

The curriculum is flexible and well balanced, with a central focus on building pupils' understanding of themselves as individuals and as learners, as well as on subjects. Parents welcome, as one said, the 'many opportunities to extend pupils' learning outside the classroom', which contribute to their great enjoyment in learning. Good opportunities for physical education using specialist staff and space in the village hall keep pupils fit and healthy. Even young ones know about safety aspects, such as those involved in using the 'climbing walls' on the excellent outdoor apparatus. Good two- and three-dimensional creative work shows strong focus on the arts. A recent review of the science curriculum has occurred, but its impact on raising pupils' achievement has not yet been demonstrated. Comments from parents testify to the high levels of care, guidance and support for pupils, including a careful assessment of their needs. These result in well focused provision, including good information about how to achieve their targets.

Clear direction and good management by the headteacher, who is supported well and held to account by the governing body, have been the key to stabilising and improving the school. There has been outstanding improvement in Foundation Stage provision since the last report, when it was unsatisfactory. Two strong, supportive key stage leaders are now in place, so the potential to improve further is good. The school's self-evaluation judgements are accurate and its targets are suitably challenging, but concise documentation to support these judgements is weaker because of unavoidable, more pressing priorities such as teaching. Self-evaluation does not properly analyse the links between provision and its impact on achievement and personal development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school responded promptly to the multitude of criticisms about the Foundation Stage in the last report, paving the way for the excellent improvement it has made. This has occurred despite setbacks because of the turnover in staffing in Reception, and the need to mix year groups in previous years. Provision is now good and applications to join now exceed the places available. Parents appreciate the good teaching their children experience and all aspects of provision are very secure. Regular, accurate assessments of skills, knowledge and understanding form a good, detailed record on which the next steps in learning are planned. The management of the Foundation Stage is good and in most areas of learning, children currently exceed expectations for their ages. Children develop excellent attitudes towards learning very early so their personal development is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in science, particularly in national tests, so that standards match those sustained in pupils' previous class work.
- Improve the school's self-evaluation procedures so that written evidence reflects accurately the impact of provision on achievement and personal development.

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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?	2
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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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	2

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?	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?	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	3
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

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

27 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Frittenden Church of England Primary School, Cranbrook TN17 2DD

Thank you so much for making me welcome into your school on 13 February. It was a pleasure to spend the day there and I am writing to tell you what I found out.

Yours is a good school where you make good progress in learning and where your personal development is excellent. I found your behaviour outstanding. All of you were polite and pleasant to me and to other adults, playing together in a very friendly way, and enjoying your work and learning enormously. It was very interesting to talk to some of you, on the playground, in classrooms at lunchtime and with a group of you more formally. I was pleased to hear that most of you think the best thing about the school is the teachers because they make your learning fun. I agree with you that teaching is good in this and other ways. I enjoyed seeing older pupils take responsibility so well, for instance Year 6 taking care of reception children. Different year groups are very different from each other, but you all get on very well together and you all make good progress from your starting points. You understand your targets and know how to achieve them. I was especially impressed by the ways in which you are learning about moods, feelings and emotions, and how well you understand yourselves as you grow up.

The school has been working hard to improve attendance and this is better now. There have been many important improvements to everything in Reception, which have made it good now. This has helped everyone to get a better start to education in the school. All adults in the school take very good care of you and make sure you all do as well as you can in all years. Even in a good school there are still a few things I have asked the school to do to improve even more. One of these is to do with the way in which the headteacher and staff write about how well the school is doing, but the most important one for you is about science. At the moment, you do not do quite as well in science, especially in the Year 6 tests, as you do in other subjects. The school is going to continue to try to find out why this is and improve it. Because you understand things so well, I am sure you can help the adults with this.

I hope you have had a good half term.

Yours sincerely

Janet Simms Lead inspector

Annex B

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Lead inspector