

Tunstall Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118735
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313070
Inspection date	4 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Woodhouse
Headteacher	Kathryn Hutchings
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Tunstall Road Sittingbourne ME9 8DX
Telephone number	01795 472895
Fax number	01795 436917

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated the impact of measures taken to improve standards in English and any variation in provision between key stages. Parts of some lessons were observed, parents' questionnaires and a sample of pupils' work were examined and school information, including self-evaluation, was scrutinised. 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 the report.

Description of the school

Pupils start at this average size school with capabilities that are a little above average. Relatively few have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).

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 that is held in high regard by parents. The headteacher and staff team have succeeded in creating what parents describe as 'a caring school where every child matters'. Parents especially appreciate that both 'children and staff have high expectations' so that 'well motivated children achieve good academic standards in a happy learning environment'. Pupils achieve well during their time at Tunstall. Year 6 national test results in some previous years have been exceptionally high, but they dipped in 2007 because pupils did much less well in their writing. Even so, they were still above average overall. Three quarters of the pupils attained higher than the nationally expected level in science and close to two thirds attained the higher level in mathematics. Although school leaders have an otherwise accurate picture of the school's many strengths and of areas for improvement, they frankly admit that they were shocked and disappointed by the only average performance in English. In this well run school, they have responded with vigour to raise standards in writing, which was where the weakness lay. Measures introduced have included extending opportunities for pupils to write in subjects other than English. In addition, teachers' marking is at its keenest in English, with teachers careful to correct technical errors in pupils' punctuation and spelling. Marking is not always quite so thorough in every other subject. Pupils' progress is now much more carefully tracked and support is put in place where pupils are identified as not doing as well as they could, including those with LDD and even very able pupils who are capable of doing better. The impact of these measures is already evident in the good quality of pupils' written work throughout the school. The good progress pupils make in their key literacy and numeracy skills prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Children start school with a range of capabilities but there are several of above average ability. They get off to a reasonable start in the Foundation Stage. Though most children reach the levels expected for their age by the start of Year 1, relatively few exceed the expected levels. This is because the Reception Year curriculum is not pushing the most able children to achieve their very best. Good teaching and learning throughout the school help pupils to make good progress, though they have traditionally done very much better in the Year 6 tests than in the teacher assessments completed in Year 2. Lessons run at a brisk pace, with work generally matched well to pupils' different abilities. This year, in Years 1 and 2, pupils are being grouped by ability rather than age to help them make better progress in developing their reading and writing through the use of phonics. The good relationships that staff have with the pupils contribute to the very strong sense of community in the school and help to motivate pupils to try hard and do their best. Pupils each have well focused individual targets which identify what they need to concentrate on in order to improve their work in English and mathematics. These also motivate them to strive to do well. The curriculum is good because it covers a broad range of subjects, including French, and is enriched by a range of clubs that is impressive for a school of this size. Pupils greatly enjoy the way in which the school is increasingly linking subjects together. They describe how their work is 'letting our imaginations go free'. They particularly enjoy the practical activities, such as making Christmas stockings in design and technology, but they also respond thoughtfully in their writing. Pupils in Year 4, for example, wrote movingly about émigrés, inspired by Ford Madox Brown's painting *The Last of England*. Reflective work such as this, and pupils' very good behaviour and mature attitudes, illustrate their outstanding personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need for a healthy diet and they very enthusiastically take part in a wide range of sports and physical activities both during and outside the school day. Some are even disapproving of the Friday indulgence of chips on the school lunch menu.

Because they benefit from excellent care, guidance and support, they feel exceedingly safe and secure in school. They express confidence that if bullying or any acts of unkindness occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. This is a view shared by most parents, although a small number disagree. The sense of community, highlighted by parents who refer to the school having a 'big family feel about it', is very strongly shared by the pupils. Even some of the youngest children are confident in expressing their views, and they are helped in this by the older pupils who act as 'buddies', visiting and helping, for example, Reception Year children as they settle into school. This contributes to pupils' strong sense of pride in their school and in their schoolwork. As a parent commented of their child, 'He is always happy to leave for school in the morning and keen to tell me what he has been doing when he returns.' Governors are not just dependant on the headteacher for information about the school. They visit regularly and play an active role in determining policy. Though they have been active in campaigning for funding to replace the school's cramped buildings, they and school leaders have not allowed this to distract them from their responsibilities. A parent made the point succinctly, 'The premises need urgent replacement, but the most is made of what they've got.' The headteacher, staff and governors work very effectively as a team. School leaders' monitoring is thorough and is helping to drive school improvement. The success of the action taken this year to raise standards in English shows the school's good capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Parents are very happy with the start their children get in the Reception Year. One, typically, wrote that they were 'delighted with how our son has settled in and with his progress'. Certainly, children get off to a good start in terms of their social development. They get on very well with each other and quickly learn to play and work together. Children were seen, for example, collaborating on some quite elaborate wooden and plastic brick constructions. Parents are generally pleased, too, with their children's early academic progress. One described how their child had 'started to read using phonics to sound out words and is already reciting new rhymes and songs'. With the caring and supportive staff, most children attain the early learning goals expected for the end of the Reception Year. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory rather than good, however, because more able children do not all do as well as they could. Whilst, for example, around half the children last year exceeded the expected standard in counting, relatively few did so well in other aspects of their mathematical development. The same was true for aspects of language and other areas of learning. School leaders recognise that this is because the most able children are not given activities that extend them enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- provide more challenging activities in the Reception Year to better extend more able children.

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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	3
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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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	2
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**

4 December 2007 Dear Pupils Inspection of Tunstall Church of England Aided Primary School, Sittingbourne, ME9 8DX Thank you for making me welcome today, and particularly those who helped me on my brief visit. I know that you and your parents are very proud of your school and I think you have every right to be. Tunstall is a good school and it is well run. I was impressed with how friendly, polite and very well behaved you are, how well you get on with each other and how enthusiastic you are in lessons. You told me how much you enjoy all the interesting activities at the school and I can see that many of you take part in lots of clubs. You also particularly enjoy the increased opportunities you now have to use laptop computers. The teaching is good and staff look after you very well. I was pleased to see how you were using the individual targets that they give you to help you to achieve your very best. You do well at Tunstall, but I was worried that in last year's national tests, Year 6 did much less well in English, and particularly writing, than they did in maths and science. I looked particularly carefully, therefore, on my brief visit, at the writing you are currently doing throughout the school. Mrs Hutchings and her team have made changes this year to give you more opportunities to write and to improve your writing, and I was very pleased to see that the impact of these were already showing through in your work. You must continue to work hard at this, so that you achieve just as well in English as you do in other subjects. There are many good things about the provision for the children in the Reception Year but there are some four-year-olds who are capable of tackling activities that could stretch them a bit more. This is the particular thing I have asked the school to improve so that children get off to an even better start at school. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you. Best wishes Yours sincerely Selwyn Ward Lead Inspector

Annex B



4 December 2007

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Sittingbourne, ME9 8DX**

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Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when I came to see you.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Selwyn Ward', with a vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Selwyn Ward
Lead Inspector