

New Ash Green Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 130938 |
| Local Authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 315666 |
| Inspection date | 18 March 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Helen Hutchings |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 309 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mike Brown |
| Headteacher | Margaret Cox |
| Date of previous school inspection | 15 March 2004 |
| School address | North Square New Ash Green Longfield DA3 8JT |
| Telephone number | 01474 873858 |
| Fax number | 01474 874921 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • the effectiveness of the school's target-setting systems • the impact of leadership and management in contributing to school improvement. Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, analysis of nationally published and school data, pupils' work, teachers' planning and the views of parents, and discussions with pupils, staff and representative governors. 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 the report.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the proportion of pupils with complex needs is higher than at the time of the last inspection. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Many other ethnic groups, including children from Traveller backgrounds, are represented in small numbers. A few children joining the school each year are at an early stage of speaking English. The school provides out-of-school care before school. The headteacher took over the running of the school in January 2006 and a new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2007. There have been significant changes in staffing over the last two years. The school has Healthy School, Eco School, Artsmark, Activemark and Quality in Study Support awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education. It has good features to its work, particularly in supporting pupils' personal development. The school successfully places itself firmly at the heart of the community, for example, when pupils support local fund raising and community events or make representation to the local council. It works well with parents and takes good account of their views, such as when setting up out-of-school provision. Some parents of children experiencing significant emotional difficulties expressed their appreciation of the support the school gives them and their children. A comment typical of many written by parents illustrates their confidence in the school: 'I am most satisfied with the way my children are taught and looked after at school. I would like to say a big thank you to New Ash Green Primary School.'

Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. They have a broad range of starting points when they join the school, but, taken together their attainment on entry, has declined since the last inspection. More pupils join the school in the Foundation Stage and in other year groups with complex learning and emotional needs. Sound teaching throughout the school enables all groups of pupils to achieve satisfactorily. In the last three years, although achieving average standards in the Year 6 national tests and meeting the school's targets, many pupils did not make enough progress between Years 2 and 6. An analysis of this performance led to the introduction of a more rigorous system to assess and monitor pupils' progress. The staff team now regularly assesses and tracks pupils' attainment against more challenging achievement targets and takes action more quickly if any pupil is not making the expected rate of progress. The range of 'booster' lessons for more able pupils and programmes for those experiencing difficulty has been increased. School data show that many pupils are now making good progress but have still some ground to make up for more limited progress in recent years. The success of the steps taken already shows that the school has a good capacity for ongoing improvement.

A significant factor contributing to pupils' enjoyment of school is the recognition of differing backgrounds. Pupils are well known on an individual basis. They understand that individuals have different needs, for example, some pupils have emotional difficulties, and are tolerant of one another. Pupils with challenging behaviour are managed well so that any potential disruption to learning is kept to a minimum. Some parents commented on behaviour disrupting learning, but pupils spoken with said that this is not a problem. Good care, support and guidance enable pupils to feel valued and supported, and relationships are strong throughout the school. Staff work well with a broad range of external agencies to ensure that individuals and vulnerable pupils have the support they need. Pupils are confident that adults listen to them and this makes a significant contribution to their good personal development and well-being. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their learning. Recent support for a few families and pupils with weaker attendance and punctuality has resulted in significantly improved attendance rates, bringing the overall rate above the national average. Pupils have a good understanding of health issues, such as the importance of physical fitness. They are very active in the playground, making good use of the outdoor fitness trail. Pupils show initiative in organising events for themselves. The school council makes an excellent contribution to the school community, for example, by managing an in-depth survey on the most common forms of bullying and organising a follow-up campaign to make sure that everyone knows exactly what to do to stay safe. Other older pupils help younger pupils well by acting as play leaders.

Pupils enjoy a rich and varied curriculum, contributing well to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. When asked what they enjoyed about school and their learning, a group of pupils commented that 'it's never boring' and talked about how they particularly enjoy the school's 'special weeks', such as the science and arts weeks. Pupils' achievement in basic skills and their good personal qualities give them a sound basis for secondary education and their future working lives. Lessons have a clear structure so that pupils are clear about what they are learning. Marking is regular and often reflects what pupils have achieved, helping them to understand how well they are meeting lesson criteria. However, sometimes errors are missed and comments do not make it clear enough to pupils exactly what they have to do to make their work better. Consequently, because they are not clear enough about the next steps for their learning, they only have a superficial understanding of their targets. Teachers take account of the differing needs of pupils in mixed-age classes, but the school recognises that it does not make enough use of the information from pupils' assessments to make sure pupils' tasks in lessons are matched precisely to their prior attainment. Extra-curricular provision is wide and varied and enriches pupils' experiences very well. Staff review and change the range of clubs regularly to meet pupils' developing interests.

Leadership and management are good. Many staff in senior and middle management positions are relatively new to their roles, but are working well together in teams to identify and share effective practice. They have participated in professional development and worked closely with the local authority to bring about improvements. Although some of the school's evaluations of its performance are a little generous, governors and the leadership team have a good understanding of what needs to be done to increase pupils' progress further. For example, they have rightly assessed that pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Already, teachers make some connections between subjects and this makes learning interesting for pupils, but they do not ensure that pupils extend their basic skills in different and everyday contexts.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Links with the pre-school on the site and with other providers are well established and there are good induction arrangements for all children into the Foundation Stage. As a result, children develop good social skills and positive attitudes to school and their learning. Good teaching and an interesting curriculum cater well for the needs of all children, including those who are learning to speak English, so that they achieve well. The classrooms are interesting for children and they undertake their tasks with enthusiasm, for example, using a computer program to help them to develop their understanding of writing. Children are comfortable with the school's routines, and this security helps them to work well together, as seen in a gymnastics session where all were very focused and responded instantly to their teacher's instructions. Many children join the Foundation Stage with lower levels of communication skills and understanding of number than expected for their age. They make good progress in the early stages of developing their literacy and numeracy skills, although their attainment overall is still below average when they join Year 1. Careful planning means that children share the outdoor area successfully with pre-school children at planned times during the day. The school has appropriate plans to improve the area further to provide more opportunities for creative play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the information from assessments to match work more closely to the pupils' needs.

- Improve marking and pupils' targets to make sure that pupils are clear about the next steps for their learning.
- Create more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

A small proportion of 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.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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|---|-----|
| 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 | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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? | 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 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 | 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of New Ash Green Primary School, Longfield, DA3 8JT

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I visited recently. I enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work.

- The school provides you with a satisfactory education, and these are the things I particularly liked about it:
- You and your parents like your school, and you feel happy and secure in school because you are looked after well by adults.
- Your behaviour is good and this helps you to work and play together well.
- Your attendance has improved and this will help you to do even better in the future.
- The special activities, such as science and arts weeks, are particularly enjoyable and help you to develop skills of collaboration that will be useful to you in the future.
- Many of you enjoy taking responsibility as school councillors or play leaders and this helps others in the school a lot.
- You understand about healthy eating and take a lot of exercise at playtime and after-school clubs.
- Teachers are always trying to make things better and I have asked them to:
 - Make sure that the work they give you is just right, neither too hard nor too easy.
 - Help you to understand exactly what you have to do next to improve when they set targets and mark your work.
 - Make sure you practise your literacy and numeracy skills more in other subjects.

You can help by making sure that you always try your best and ask for help if there is anything you do not understand.

Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires. I enjoyed reading their comments. I wish everyone at New Ash Green every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector

19 March 2008

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- The special activities, such as science and arts weeks, are particularly enjoyable and help you to develop skills of collaboration that will be useful to you in the future.
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Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector