

Kings Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130952
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	315674
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Liz Kounnou

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Crowe
Headteacher	Norman Moore
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Crispin Way Kings Hill West Malling ME19 4LS
Telephone number	01732 842739
Fax number	01732 849634

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves an area of economic advantage. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Around one in ten of the pupils are from diverse minority ethnic groups. Most children start school with levels of attainment that are above national expectations for their age. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties is significantly lower than average. The school gained a Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2006, and in 2007 achieved a Sports Mark, a Quality in Study Support award, and the Healthy School award. The deputy headteacher temporarily led the school during the inspection period.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents are very supportive of this good school and value the headteacher's good leadership. As one commented, 'Since the headteacher joined the school, there have been a number of positive changes'. Parents also say their children are happy and confident, and love going to school. Excellent partnerships with parents, local schools and other agencies, including some well-established international links, considerably enhance opportunities for pupils all through the school. A Master Class for the most able pupils in Year 6 stems from partnership work with the local secondary school, and highly motivates this group of talented young people. The curriculum is well designed to meet pupils' needs, whatever their ability, and capture their interests. Setting pupils by ability for English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 ensures that pupils work at the right level and increase their skills at a good rate.

The school's high expectations result in good achievement for most pupils. More pupils reach the higher levels in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science than is typical, so that standards are above average. Standards are also high in information and communication technology (ICT), because pupils relish working in the well-appointed ICT suite and are given tasks that challenge and extend them. Although standards are above average in Key Stage 1, more able pupils make faster progress in reading than in writing. This is partly due to the lack of opportunities to develop writing skills in subjects across the curriculum, and partly due to lower expectations from teachers. For example, Key Stage 1 pupils often write on worksheets that limit the development of their skills. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress in developing writing skills accelerates considerably in Years 5 and 6, where activities are very challenging. Good teaching and learning is based on thorough assessments of pupils' work. Challenging targets are set, but the systems for sharing information about personal learning targets with pupils are inconsistent. As a result, not all pupils are clear about how to reach the next steps in their learning. Teachers regularly explain what pupils will learn in lessons, but few pupils know how to judge for themselves if they have done well. Some aspects of teaching and learning are outstanding. In one lesson, Year 4 pupils, working together to plan a play script, were extremely enthusiastic about the project so that the lesson was buzzing with their contributions and they made rapid progress. Enjoyable lessons and a rich curriculum are the main reasons why all aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say, 'Teachers make lessons fun'. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to use their initiative, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Good provision in the Foundation Stage encourages independence from the start, and ensures that children develop good writing skills through a variety of fascinating activities. Leadership and management are good. School leaders effectively bring about improvement, and ensure that pupils are well cared for and make good progress. Diligent management of the provision for vulnerable pupils ensures that parents are fully involved in the guidance and support their children receive. As a result, pupils who have learning difficulties are making good progress.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

A rich variety of well-planned activities ensures that children have plenty of fun. They happily engage in the activities throughout the day, sometimes working with the teacher and sometimes organising themselves. An outstanding feature of the Foundation Stage is the way that small groups of children use the interactive whiteboard to plan out the activities that they will

complete each day. In one lesson, the children thought really hard about this and knew that they would be talking to the class at the end of the day to explain how well they had done. Activities such as these encourage children to develop good levels of independence right from the start. A few activities lack challenge; for example, some of the outdoor activities are not designed to help children move onto the next steps in learning. Nonetheless, children make good progress and reach higher levels than expected for their age by the time they move into Key Stage 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve opportunities for pupils in Year 1 to Year 4 to develop writing skills across the curriculum, in order to raise writing standards even further, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Ensure that pupils throughout the school know how to reach the next steps in learning, and how to judge for themselves if their work is good.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average throughout the school and most pupils achieve well. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make exceptionally good progress. Almost half the pupils in Year 6 reach the higher Level 5 in writing, which is well above the national average. The school has worked hard to improve pupils' progress in mathematics and has successfully ensured that standards have risen this year. Expectations of what pupils could achieve are not consistently high in all classes, and this means that pupils' progress varies as they move up through the school, particularly in the development of high level writing skills. Nonetheless, careful tracking of pupils' progress ensures that challenging targets are set for pupils of all abilities. Pupils who have learning difficulties make good progress, due to the well managed support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are considerate of one another, show great self-confidence and enjoy school. Parents write, 'My son always looks forward to attending school', and 'My daughter is always keen to get there'. Attendance is well above average as a result. The school council plays an active part, running a tuck shop that contributes well to pupils' healthy lifestyles. Pupils make a good contribution to school decisions. Their suggestion to separate an area for playing football outside has added to the good levels of safety. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to chair and run the council meetings themselves. Pupils behave well all around the school. They often organise themselves and say that behaviour has improved since the prefects were introduced. In addition to pupils' good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, the many opportunities to work cooperatively prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching leads to a great deal of enjoyment and enthusiasm and ensures that pupils make good progress in their learning. Pupils frequently take an active role in lessons and this keeps

them motivated and on task. Lessons are well planned, with clear aims that are usually shared with pupils. The school has begun to develop ways to explain to pupils how they could judge the success of their work in lessons. Currently, this is not fully developed in all classrooms, so that most pupils do not know how to judge the quality of their own learning. Assessment procedures are thorough so that teachers know how well all their pupils are doing. There are high expectations, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where pupils do very well. In other year groups, lessons could be more challenging for the most able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is adapted well to pupils' needs, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The setting arrangements for English and mathematics are successful because pupils feel comfortable with the level of work in these groups, enjoying the challenge and appreciating the support. There is a strong focus on ensuring that pupils get to grips with basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and also in ICT. Good opportunities to practice and use ICT skills occur in many different subjects. Opportunities for writing are not always sufficiently challenging in lessons across the curriculum. Plenty of extra activities help pupils to develop personal skills well. Pupils have recently been involved in World Maths Day, allowing them to compete against mathematicians from around the world.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is very good and there are thorough arrangements to ensure pupils' safety. There are high expectations for pupils to reach challenging targets from year to year and frequent assessments to check which pupils are on track. Currently there is not a consistent system to ensure that all the pupils know how to reach the next steps in learning. Effective support helps pupils with the local authority selective testing arrangements in Year 6. As a result, a good proportion of pupils are successful. Vulnerable children are supported very well through exceptionally effective links with their parents and other professionals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has ensured that senior leaders play a full part in checking how well the school is doing. This good team work has enabled them to lead the school very well in his absence. Good leadership and management, combined with good systems for evaluating the school, have led to a significant improvement in mathematics standards this year. A very clear focus on developing pupils' skills in aspects of mathematics that relate to shape and space is evident all through the school. The capacity to bring about further improvements is good. Governors play a full part in strategic planning because they receive clear information about how well pupils are doing. This enables them to target resources very effectively. The school's strategic plan sets out clearly how school leaders intend to build on pupils' good progress in future. School leaders, including governors, are well aware of the need to improve the consistency of teaching and learning, and to develop clearer systems for involving pupils in personal learning targets in order to raise standards even further.

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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?	1
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?	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

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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kings Hill School, West Malling ME19 4LS

Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us when we visited your school. Yours is a good school and you are making good progress because the teaching is good. This means that you are doing better than other children of your age by the time you leave Year 6. The headteacher, staff and governors work well together to help you succeed at school. Your parents agree that it is a good school.

Here are the things that are best about your school.

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 do exceptionally well in writing.
- You behave well all through the day.
- The prefects are very proud of all the extra responsibilities they have around the school and most of you think they are very helpful.
- The school council makes a lot of decisions about how to make your school even better.
- Really good links with other schools mean that you can take part in challenging activities, such as the Master Class.
- You enjoy school, are enthusiastic in lessons and have a lot of fun.
- You have plenty of opportunities to make decisions about your work, even in the Reception class.

There are a few things that could be even better. We have asked the school to make sure that those of you in Year 1 to Year 4 have even better opportunities to improve your writing. We have also asked the school to make sure that you all know what you need to learn next, and how to check that you have done well in each lesson.

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

Yours faithfully

Liz Kounnou Lead Inspector

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Lead Inspector