

Catsfield Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114494
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326020
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Joan Greenfield

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	106
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	J Midgley
Headteacher	Rosalind Butters
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Road Catsfield Battle TN33 9DP
Telephone number	01424 892247

Age group	5–11
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Inspection number	326020

Fax number

01424 893690

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Catsfield Church of England is a small primary school. The vast majority of pupils are from White British families. A lower proportion of pupils than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the numbers vary considerably in each year group. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. The school has introduced a breakfast club very recently.

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. It has made good progress since its last inspection and continues to improve under the effective leadership of the headteacher. The success of the initiatives introduced this year, especially in improving writing across the school and in providing greater challenges to the more able pupils, shows that the school has good capacity to improve further. Parents are extremely positive about the school, especially the good care their children receive and the quality of leadership and management. Typical comments include: 'I cannot speak highly enough of Catsfield School'; '...the numerous after-school clubs and activities'; and '...children are helped to attain high standards and are treated as individuals.' The school's 'open door' approach helps to ensure that relationships and communication with parents remain positive.

Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average and pupils achieve well. This is reflected in the school's national test results for the last two years. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and achieve well. Because of the small numbers in each year group, standards can vary from year to year because of pupils' varied starting points, but they make good progress because of the good teaching. Weaknesses identified in pupils' writing in 2008 are being tackled successfully through a range of intervention strategies. Some of these are focused on increasing the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5, which showed a dip in the English results in 2008. The school's tracking systems show that pupils are on course to do better this year than last.

Pupils' clear enjoyment of school is seen in their positive attitudes to learning and in the confident way in which they talk about the school and the activities they undertake, especially through the Eco club. They are polite and friendly. Their contribution to the school's development and to the local community is good, as is their understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Pupils behave well and show good concern for one another, acting as 'buddies' and 'peer mentors' to support those who need a little more support. The effective curriculum and the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities ensure that pupils develop good academic and personal skills that prepare them well for their future lives. The good teaching ensures that pupils receive work that is suitably matched to their needs. As a result, pupils of all abilities make good gains in their learning. Pupils receive good care, guidance and support. The regular assessment of their progress identifies pupils in danger of falling behind so that additional support can be provided. Although pupils are set shorter term targets by teachers these are not always sharp enough to help individual pupils know what precisely they need to do to improve further or reviewed often enough.

The effective leadership of the headteacher, with the good support of the governing body and other leaders, ensures that the school is clear about its future direction. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through the monitoring activities that they undertake. The school's priorities are the right ones and the success of the initiatives that have been introduced this year show that leadership and management are good. Many aspects of the school's work make a strong contribution to community cohesion, but the impact of their actions have not been evaluated systematically enough.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effective provision gives children a good start to their education. They receive good support from adults, enabling them to settle quickly into school. A good focus on developing their social skills helps them to develop positive attitudes to learning, as well as enhancing their confidence and self-esteem. As a result, they play and work together well and respond positively to adults. Children's skills when they enter Reception are broadly as expected, although they can vary quite considerably from year to year because of the small numbers. Children make good progress across all areas of learning because the teacher provides them with a variety of interesting activities to extend their learning. As a result, children achieve well. Their speaking and listening skills are particularly good. Children in Reception are on course to exceed the expected goals for learning for children of this age. The activities led by adults are sometimes more focused and purposeful than those selected by the children themselves, which means that the gains in learning are not always as secure. The learning opportunities provided in the outdoor area are satisfactory, although children are not always able to move seamlessly between the classroom and outside. Leadership is satisfactory. The teacher temporarily covering the extended absence of the coordinator has ensured that the good quality of provision has been maintained. The assessment of children's progress is undertaken regularly and staff have developed good portfolios of children's work over time to show the progress they make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set sharper shorter-term targets for individual pupils and review their progress in meeting them more frequently.
- Review more formally the contribution that the school makes to promoting community cohesion.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well during their time at the school and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Although their skills on entry to the school vary considerably because of the small year groups, pupils make good progress at all stages. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average but pupils are achieving well when account is taken of their starting points. The national tests results in Year 6 have been above average overall for the past two years. They dipped in 2008 because of a decline in the results in English and mathematics, which were average, although those in science remained above average. The school has taken prompt and successful action to tackle the weaknesses identified in writing. For example, staff have focused on linking sounds and letters in Years 1 and 2, and introduced 'big writing' activities and put more emphasis on extending pupils' language and vocabulary through first-hand experiences in Years 1 to 6. Higher attaining pupils make good progress, helped by the introduction of the 'Flying High' writing project. The targeted support that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive enables them to make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly and welcoming, and show good care for one another. Their spiritual, moral and social awareness is particularly well developed and these aspects are slightly stronger than

their cultural development. Pupils clearly enjoy school, although their attendance is average. They participate enthusiastically in the range of opportunities they are given. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle, and they show this through their healthy lunchboxes and their participation in the extra-curricular clubs. They behave well. Their understanding of how to stay safe is good and they are confident that staff will help them if they have any problems. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local community. The views of the school council are taken seriously and acted upon. Pupils raise money for several charities and do much in the local community, which promotes their citizenship skills and community cohesion well. Their good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, supported by effective team-working and problem-solving skills, ensure that they are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress because the teaching meets their needs well. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and ensure that tasks and activities are appropriate to the pupils' wide age range and abilities in the mixed-age classes. Pupils who need extra help receive additional resources, as well as effective support from teaching assistants. The most able pupils receive more difficult work to ensure that they are constantly challenged. The grouping arrangements in classes allow pupils to work within their year group but also for some of the younger pupils to work with older pupils to make sure that they do not mark time. Relationships are strong throughout the school and teachers manage their classes well. The school's close links with parents and its 'open door' policy means that any concerns can be ironed out swiftly. Some pupils' handwriting skills are not particularly well developed, which affects the fluency of their writing and the presentation of some of their work. The school recognises that insufficient attention has been paid to handwriting in recent months.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A creative approach to planning the curriculum means that pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills can be applied and enhanced across the curriculum as a whole. This approach makes learning more meaningful for the pupils as it provides them with a good range of first-hand experiences, especially through the outdoor environment. However, the content of some of their 'learning journeys' remains rather limited in scope and does not always extend pupils' horizons well enough. The focus on learning through practical and investigative work gives pupils a good understanding of science. Art is particularly strong, as seen in the high quality displays around the school. Pupils benefit from the input from a practising artist. The personal, social and health education programme supports pupils' personal development well. The wide range of enrichment activities, which include the many extra-curricular clubs, visits and visitors, add considerably to pupils' skills and experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff have a good understanding of the needs of individual pupils and give them the right kind of support to enable them to do well. The arrangements to safeguard pupils and ensure their

health and safety meet requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are considered vulnerable are given valuable support to enable them to benefit from all the activities the school provides. Children settle in quickly when they start school and the transition arrangements for the older pupils are being extended effectively. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly, with those in danger of falling behind identified at an early stage so that additional support can be provided. These systems are robust. Pupils are set group targets but these are often too general. Targets for individual pupils are not specific enough or reviewed often enough to help pupils improve their work. Although there is much good diagnostic and helpful marking in some classes, it varies in its consistency and quality across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher plays a key and effective role in setting a clear direction to the work of this small school and ensuring that it continues to improve. This is evident from the success of the initiatives that have been implemented this year to tackle areas of weakness identified through its self-evaluation, especially in writing and mathematics. The small senior leadership team, which is relatively new, is having an increasing impact on the school's work. Senior staff check the school's work regularly, undertaking lesson observations and talking with pupils in order to set the school's targets which are challenging. This is supplemented by the governors' focused visits and the regular presentations subject leaders make to the governing body. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and fulfil their responsibilities well. The school knows its own community and that of the local area well. The curriculum and the developing links with a contrasting school in this country and with a school in France give pupils a good understanding of the different communities in this country and abroad. However, the school has not done enough to check what impact these links are having on community cohesion.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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/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	2
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	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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Catsfield Church of England Primary School, Battle, TN33 9DP

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed seeing you at work and play and the discussions we had with some of you helped us to find out so much more about the school. This letter is to tell you what we found.

- You go to a good school that helps you to achieve well.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a good start in school.
- The good teaching is helping you to make good progress so that standards are above average by the time you leave in Year 6.
- You are polite and friendly to each other and to adults, and you look after each other well.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy.
- You told us that you enjoy coming to school and particularly like the many clubs that take place after school.
- Your school council is good at helping the school to get better and many of you do a great deal to help others less fortunate than yourselves.
- The work that you do is interesting and helps you to use your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in many other subjects.
- Staff look after you well and ensure that those of you who need additional support are given it.
- The adults who run the school have a clear idea of what they need to do to make the school even better and are working hard to make sure this happens.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do two things in particular to help the school get even better.

- Give you clearer targets to work towards and check more often how well you are doing in meeting these targets.
- Check more carefully how well the school is helping you to get a better understanding of people in your local area, in this country and in the wider world.

We hope that you will continue to work hard and do your very best.

Yours faithfully

Joan Greenfield

Lead inspector