

# St Paul's Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118461
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326832
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Eileen Chadwick

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	204
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anne Watts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Hyde
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Hillary Road Maidstone ME14 2BS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 753322
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 691385

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Pupils' progress from Reception to Year 2 and the impact of mobility on the standards achieved.
- The consistency of good teaching across the school and its impact on raising achievement.
- The impact of leadership and management at different levels on raising pupils' achievement, especially through monitoring and evaluation.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and staff, a review of the assessment data the school uses to track pupils' progress, and analysis of pupils' work. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors 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

The school is average in size and serves a diverse community. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is above average. One third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and many of them speak English as an additional language. The largest group is of Nepali heritage and the families of these pupils are stationed at the nearby army barracks. Mobility of pupils is high, at nearly 40%, caused mainly by army relocation and housing association moves. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. These pupils mainly have speech, language, literacy and/or behavioural problems. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in three Reception classes. A rise in numbers has meant there is one extra class for Reception this year. The nursery on the school's premises is managed by a private company.

There have been recent substantial staff changes: the headteacher took up post in September 2008 following a year when there was a temporary headteacher. The school has gained Basic Skills Quality Mark, Active Mark Gold and Healthy Schools awards.

## 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. Pupils achieve well and really enjoy school. There is a strong family ethos and everyone is valued and encouraged to develop confidence. High standards of care promote pupils' good personal development and behaviour. The considerable numbers of pupils who join in different year groups are very well integrated into the life of the school. It is a testament to staff and governors that high quality relationships, the nurturing atmosphere and strong links with the local community have been maintained during a recent period of staff changes. The headteacher has settled well and, with other senior leaders, provides good leadership. Together, they are forging an effective team who are well positioned to improve the school further. The school is well regarded by parents. One parent wrote, 'I am so happy with my child's progress. She can read any kind of book and spell very well. I think the teachers do such a good job'.

Reception children settle well as a result of a well-thought-out induction programme. From starting points that are often lower than normally seen, children make good progress and this begins to lift their attainment. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. Academic performance information shows that standards improved over the last two years and were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are not as high for the current Year 2 pupils and are broadly average, although pupils achieve well compared with their starting points. Pupil mobility has been high for this year group, where one third of pupils entered after Reception, often with gaps in their skills and knowledge, limited English or learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

In all year groups, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The school has very robust specialist support programmes for helping these and lower-attaining pupils catch up from any past underachievement. However, during group work in literacy and numeracy lessons, reading tasks are occasionally hard for lower attaining pupils. In these instances, pupils are not given enough help with reading before they work independently. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported and make progress in line with their peers. More capable pupils achieve well. Of particular note is the way more capable pupils with limited English are quickly identified to ensure their learning is commensurate with their previous skills and not restricted because of their language needs. The additional bilingual support makes a strong contribution to this.

Teaching, learning and the curriculum are good overall and underpin pupils' good achievement. Teachers manage pupils well and use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to support pupils' learning. Good arrangements for the school to evaluate its work, including thorough assessment systems and target setting, have led to the school having an accurate view of its own performance. The school acknowledges there are inconsistencies in the way class teachers match work to lower-attaining pupils' needs. Given the staff changes, not all subject leaders are yet having a full impact on raising pupils' achievement. The school has identified the need to give them more opportunities to observe lessons to gauge the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups. Governors are supportive and are developing more rigorous monitoring and levels of challenge under the knowledgeable leadership of the recently appointed chair.

Sport and ICT are strong features of the curriculum and there is a good range of visits, visitors and clubs. Links between subjects make learning meaningful and there are good opportunities

for pupils to develop their writing in other subjects. Resources are satisfactory but reading resources and those for practical play in the Early Years Foundation Stage are stretched now that numbers entering this year group have risen. The strong focus on eating healthily and on sport promotes pupils' good understanding of what they need to do to keep fit. Pupils feel safe and secure because they know staff have their well-being at heart and are always prepared to listen and take action in case of problems. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported and there are extremely good links with outside agencies to ensure they settle and can succeed. Most pupils attend regularly but a minority do not, and the school works closely with education welfare staff to tackle any issues. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and promotes pupils' personal development well. They make a strong contribution to their school and local community, for instance through their fundraising for charities. Community cohesion is good. The school reflects and celebrates the diversity of its culture and pupils learn to understand and value each others' cultures and faiths from an early age. The good links with the local community promote equality well, for example the ones with Nepalese parents enable their children quickly settle so they can make the most of school.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children start school with overall attainment that is well below that typical for their age, although this fluctuates from year to year due to mobility and the proportions of those for whom English is an additional language. Children make good progress from their starting points, although standards are below average on entry to Year 1. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make a secure start because good use is made of specialist support services to help these children to adjust to school. Personal development is good so children enjoy coming to school because of the welcoming atmosphere, supportive staff and well-planned activities. Clear systems help children become familiar with daily routines. The good quality teaching ensures there is a suitable balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities, and this allows the children to develop independent learning skills and make choices. The strong focus on developing children's speaking and communication skills and regular learning of letters and sounds help children get off to a good start in early literacy. Good use is made of indoor role play and outdoor areas for learning across the curriculum, for example the 'police station' and the 'post office'. The school has worked hard to provide enough resources now that there are three classes but play and reading resources are still rather stretched. The school has wisely identified the need to build further on these resources. Good care ensures children remain safe. Assessment is good and the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed with a clear sense of direction.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that class teachers consistently match lower-attaining pupils' reading tasks to their prior attainment so they are better prepared for working independently.
- Increase opportunities for subject leaders to evaluate the impact of teaching on the progress and attainment of pupils with different abilities.
- Increase resources for reading and for play in Reception.

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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	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	3
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**

12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Paul's Infant School, Maidstone ME14 2BS

Thank you for being such a big help when we came to visit your school. Thank you for being so friendly, too. We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. Your views are important, as you are the school's customers.

Firstly, you need to know you go to a good school where you make good progress. Here are some good things about your school:

- You make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You get off to a good start in the Reception classes and are learning your sounds well.
- You have good opportunities for using computers, and for sport and clubs.
- You enjoy school and behave well. This helps to make your school a happy one.
- You understand what you need to do to keep yourself fit and healthy.
- Teachers take good care of you and make sure you are kept very safe.
- Your headteacher and senior leaders are doing a good job in running the school.

Here are the things we are asking the school to improve:

- Make sure your work is never too hard and that teachers give you enough help with reading so you can work on your own more confidently.
- Help teachers in charge of subjects to be more involved in checking up on how well you are learning.
- Improve resources for reading, and also for play for those of you in Reception.

You can help your teachers by making sure you continue to work hard at improving your reading, writing and mathematics.

Thank you again for being so helpful.

Yours faithfully

Eileen Chadwick

Lead Inspector