

# Fordcombe Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118719
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	326880
<b>Inspection date</b>	10 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Richard Blackmore

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	100
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>	Nick Weaver
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robin Dungate
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 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>	Fordcombe Green Tunbridge Wells TN3 0RY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 740224
<b>Fax number</b>	01892 740224

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

All pupils in this small school are from White British backgrounds and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils' needs include speech, language and communication difficulties. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provides for four- and five-year-old children, taught in one Reception class. The school has a number of awards reflecting its commitment to promoting pupils' basic skills, healthy living, their environmental awareness and in providing out-of-school activities.

## 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 a number of real strengths. At its core is the leadership of the highly committed and enthusiastic headteacher, supported by conscientious staff. Pupils and parents overwhelmingly support the school and are extremely pleased with the nurturing and caring ethos that pervades the school. Their typical feelings were encapsulated in one parent's comment of it being 'like a home away from home'. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All reach and some exceed the expected standards in all areas of learning. Pupils' achievement is good and by the end of Year 6 they reach above average standards as a result of effective teaching and a good understanding of pupils' abilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because the school quickly identifies their needs and takes action to address learning difficulties. The school has identified that pupils' writing skills need to improve further, and has already implemented good plans to remedy any shortcomings and is seeing the benefit as seen in some very good extended writing observed during the inspection.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, helped by the wide range of diverse and stimulating opportunities that encourage reflection and critical thinking. Pupils' independence, responsible approach to school and self-reliance are excellent, so that when working in pairs or small groups they learn effectively. Pupils confidently rise to the challenge of the responsibilities they have around school, including Year 6 pupils being 'buddies' to the youngest pupils. This ensures pupils' start to school life is highly positive. Pupils' outstanding behaviour and enjoyment of school contribute significantly to their great respect and care for one another and the whole-school community.

Teachers motivate pupils by working with them to develop ways of improving the already good teaching and learning. This includes the good use of information and communication technology (ICT). There is a strong focus on using questions to provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and respond to challenging tasks. For example, pupils were asked to provide an explanation for the ratio of sides to edges when studying three-dimensional shapes. These types of activities provide pupils with real challenge and are a significant factor in the good progress they make. The enjoyment of school is partly due to the broad and carefully balanced curriculum which helps pupils to gain good levels of numeracy and literacy skills. They learn through many first-hand experiences and topics are enriched with exciting visits and visitors. However, pupils have limited opportunities to use skills developed in one subject in a different context or subject. A good range of after-school activities and residential visits enriches the curriculum effectively.

Very strong pastoral care across the school is reflected in the way pupils feel confident in talking to staff if they have any concerns. As pupils are closely supported, they feel safe and positive about the school and their learning. This helps their personal qualities to flourish. There is good support from well-briefed teaching assistants for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring good progress. While marking has improved since the last inspection, pupils are not given enough guidance relating specifically to the learning intention of lessons, which hinders improvement in their work.

All staff playing an effective role in supporting the headteacher and senior staff in making this a good school. The headteacher leads by example, which ensures the school's smooth running on a day-to-day basis, while also regularly teaching classes. Self-evaluation is rigorous and priorities identified have led to improvement. However, some subject leaders are not always

clear how planned improvements will be carried out. Governors are influential in the school and clearly understand its strengths and weaknesses.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Provision is good and ensures that children have a smooth start and make good progress. This is most evident in the progress children make in knowing their sounds and letters. The welfare and personal development of children is outstanding. This contributes to exceptionally high levels of independence, curiosity and concentration in their indoor and outdoor learning. Children are very creative in setting up their own situations for imaginative play. They make confident responses in whole-class settings. Language and communication are developed well through links to knowledge and understanding of the world, for example, in the growing of plants and vegetables. Children relished the chance to make telephones and binoculars from modeling materials to develop their skills. There is good leadership and management, which ensures that teaching is typically good. However, the evaluation of provision is not sufficiently reviewed to ensure ongoing improvement. The school has identified this as an area for development. There is a very strong focus on developing children's social skills and their confidence to work independently. A good balance exists between activities directed by the teacher and those which the children choose themselves.

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

- Give subject leaders more guidance about how to turn their subject priorities and needs into setting achievable steps for improvement.
- Ensure teachers' marking refers more closely to the aims of the lesson, so that pupils can be more aware of how to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

With such small numbers, attainment on entry to school varies year on year and pupils in each group have differing abilities and needs. Overall children start school with a range of skills that are close to those typically found for their age. They achieve well through the school and by the time they leave they reach above average standards. Pupils make the best progress in mathematics and English. The school is aware of this and is now focusing on how it can maintain the recent increase in pupils' attainment in science and further improve pupils' weaker investigative skills. Pupils have well-developed skills in ICT, particularly in editing text on computers. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of an effective range of support programmes that are tailored to individual needs.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and excellent attitudes and behaviour. Pupils work extremely well together, make lively and interesting contributions to discussions and their effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This means social relationships are excellent and they greatly value the friendships they make. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. The school council helps pupils to understand the democratic process and take on particular roles that help improve the school. This makes a good contribution to their learning. Pupils commented on the equally mutual

respect shown by their teachers which helps them develop confidence, and know there is someone to turn to if they have a problem. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of healthy diet and take part in a wide range of physical activities. Pupils make an extremely significant contribution to school and village life and enthusiastically join in with activities within their local community and beyond. Pupils readily tell visitors about the school's latest initiatives, such as being 'eco' aware, urging everyone to play their part. This reflects pupils' enthusiasm and responsibility for school and helps prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are consistently good across the school. The teaching styles of teachers are different but all equally effective in providing a wide range of learning experiences that add much to pupils' enjoyment of school. Lessons are well planned and activities closely match pupils' ability so that they are suitably challenged. However, teachers do not always use mistakes made by pupils to address common misconceptions or mark pupils' work with sufficient reference to the aim of each lesson. Other teaching pushes pupils' learning on at a speedy rate and many lessons are challenging yet fun for pupils of all abilities. Relationships are good and teaching assistants add much to help provide a learning environment where pupils progress well. Teaching assistants energetically support pupils with particular needs by asking searching questions and prompting continuous thinking.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The interesting curriculum meets the needs of all learners. A good emphasis is placed on teaching and using basic skills in English and mathematics. The school is continuing its drive to improve the ICT skills of pupils, with the effectively used suite having already had a positive impact on pupils' abilities. Less well established are innovative ways to ensure pupils' key skills, including investigative work and particularly writing, are developed across all subjects and included as part of different curriculum projects. A good range of extra-curricular clubs, from hand bells to violin lessons, help enrich the pupils' classroom experiences very well and broaden pupils' knowledge.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The welfare of pupils is given a high priority and staff know the social, academic and personal needs of pupils well. This helps pupils feel valued and they have a voice that is listened to and respected, often through the work of the school council. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust. Good links with outside support agencies enable the school to tap into additional sources of help for pupils when needed. Early identification of pupils who have additional needs and the involvement of parents improve their work and skill levels across different curriculum areas. As one parent commented about their child, 'The school have been extremely proactive in managing his needs.' Pupils use targets to guide their learning, aided by frequent discussions with their teacher but marking does not always support children in improving their work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher, supported effectively by knowledgeable governors, has maintained a good team ethos despite some recent staff changes. This has kept the school moving forward by, for example, improving pupils' writing and is now looking to improve science. Subject leaders, although having correctly identified priorities for the future, are insufficiently clear about how planned improvements will be achieved. Governance is good, with a successful blend of challenge and support which has resulted in improvements to the school, notably in the provision for ICT work. The school promotes community cohesion well with regular opportunities to take part in village life, although pupils' understanding of other UK regions is less well established. Their knowledge of cultures further away is enhanced by their links with a community in Rwanda which the pupils really appreciate. Rising standards, combined with improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection, show that the school has a good capacity to improve 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?	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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	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

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<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>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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

<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	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**

11 February 2009

- Dear Pupils Inspection of Fordcombe Church of England School, Tunbridge Wells TN3 0RY  
After spending one day in your school, I want to thank you all so much for making the experience a very enjoyable one. Yours is a good school which is trying hard to be even better. Here are some of the things we found out:
- Children in the Reception class settle quickly to school and learn well.
- You said you feel safe and all the staff make sure that you are. You said you like the 'friendly' atmosphere and I noticed it too.
- Teaching is good and you feel you can talk to them if you are worried.
- You really know about keeping fit, drinking water and what foods are the best to eat.
- The activities you do in school like your work on the computers is interesting.
- You all behave brilliantly and the school helps you become responsible.
- You make good progress in your work and reach above average standards by the time you leave.
- Your involvement with local events such as the Over 60s group and Remembrance Day is excellent.
- Here are the two things we would like to see improved:
- Teachers in charge of different subjects need to be clearer what they need to do to improve their areas of responsibility.
- Marking helps you improve your work.

Yours faithfully, Richard Blackmore Lead inspector