

Whitstable and Seasalter Endowed Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118737
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326883
Inspection date	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Clements
Headteacher	Enid Burrows
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2006
School address	High Street Whitstable CT5 1AY
Telephone number	01227 273630
Fax number	01227 273630

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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: current achievement and standards; the effectiveness of the school's systems to track pupils' progress; and the impact of leadership and management at all levels in contributing to school improvement.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of the governing body, the views of parents and a scrutiny of the school's documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but 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 smaller than most primary schools. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and there is a small number from a range of minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high. The needs of these pupils are wide-ranging and include speech, language and communication, physical and emotional, emotional and social difficulties. The school has recently opened a breakfast and after-school facility and holds Active Mark, Healthy School, School Sports Co-ordinator and Eco Status 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 which has built well on the many strengths identified when the school was last inspected and has raised pupils' attainment further. A key contributor to the school's success is the high quality care, support and guidance which results in pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to school and are really proud of it. They reflect maturely on their learning and all that the school offers. When asked what they would want to improve, they had a very clear view that 'it's good enough now – nothing', indicating their exceptionally strong enjoyment of school. They are secure in the knowledge that they are listened to and that their views are valued. In response, pupils make an outstanding contribution to school life. They enthusiastically take on a wide range of responsibilities, such as being prefects or school councillors, or managing the fruit tuck shop. These are only a few examples of how pupils acquire leadership and personal skills which, alongside their academic achievement, enable them to move on confidently to the next stage of their education. Year 6 pupils are rightly proud of the help and encouragement they give younger pupils, for example, running the friendship support group. This helps pupils to develop the skills and understanding to stay safe. Other groups, such as the 'green team' reinforce pupils' already strong awareness of how to live healthy lifestyles.

Pupils achieve well and standards are above average. Their overall attainment when they join the school is a little below average, with some pupils having particular weaknesses in their literacy skills. Pupils make good progress through the school so that standards in the Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science are generally above average. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading, which is generally stronger than writing. The school tracks pupils' progress regularly and accurately against challenging targets and takes prompt effective action when a pupil is in danger of falling behind. Coupled with very thorough marking, this gives pupils a clear understanding of the quality of their work and what they have to do to improve further.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive in their support of the school. They particularly praise the positive environment and Christian ethos, and the way in which 'the staff take trouble to relate to the children as individuals, which makes them feel valued'. Other parents commented specifically on how their children 'blossom and grow in confidence' during their school career. The school works exceptionally well with a range of partners to promote pupils' well-being. For example, the events, such as literacy and numeracy workshops for parents, help to keep parents informed about the curriculum and their children's progress. Links with other local schools help staff to extend their skills, and to use their understanding of infant and secondary practice to ease transition for pupils at key times. Close links with external agencies complement staff expertise to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, individuals and groups of pupils have access to a wide range of support for their personal and academic development. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they say that bullying is rare. They feel able to raise problems with peer mediators or adults because they know that issues are dealt with quickly. One comment made by a parent summarised well the underlying reason for the good teaching and learning across the school, 'the school is adept in traditional and contemporary teaching methods which bring out the best in children'. Good relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults mean that pupils are able to try things out for themselves and take risks in their learning within a very secure classroom environment. Teachers have a deep knowledge of children in their groups, and they use this

effectively to set work which matches pupils' individual needs. They place a strong emphasis on explaining things well and then developing pupils' thinking skills by requiring them to explain their thinking carefully, both orally and in writing. Pupils respond very well with high levels of concentration in lessons. Whilst the curriculum gives priority to English, mathematics and science, pupils have a broad and balanced programme, fully covering National Curriculum requirements. Topics are planned to make learning interesting by making links across subjects where possible. For example, opportunities for pupils to respond to issues in religious education have proved successful in developing pupils' writing skills. Staff intend to extend this approach further and have developed plans to introduce further initiatives to motivate writers, but these have not yet been fully implemented. Where possible, the school uses a practical approach to make learning relevant and exciting. In addition to a wide range of visits and visitors to the school, pupils particularly enjoy the many themed events, such as book or multi-cultural weeks. These events also make an important contribution to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Leadership is strong. It is evident in the exceptional teamwork seen across the whole school. The importance of the individual is central to the school's ethos, and equality is promoted exceptionally well. The school promotes community cohesion well by ensuring that pupils develop a very strong awareness of diversity within the school and local community, as well as more globally. Much of the school's success is down to the headteacher's drive. She works closely with the deputy headteacher and chair of governors to empower other leaders to take full responsibility for their areas and to share expertise across the school. Teachers work outstandingly well in teams to plan challenging lessons and a range of extra-curricular activities which encourage pupils to develop new pursuits in addition to following existing interests. Sporting activities are particularly popular with pupils. Staff are enthusiastic about learning from others and bringing new ideas into the school, but are careful in their choice of initiatives. The action they take is based on a rigorous evaluation of current practice to identify which developments will have the greatest impact on pupils' achievement and experiences. As a result, standards in the school are improving much more rapidly than nationally. The governing body capably questions and challenges the school about its performance and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school's sustained record of improving pupils' achievements and its accurate understanding of its own effectiveness give it an outstanding capacity for ongoing improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement the plans to increase the range of approaches to develop pupils' writing skills.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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

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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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

26 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitstable and Seasalter CE Endowed Junior School, Whitstable CT5 1AY

Thank you for making me so welcome during my recent visit. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about all the interesting things you do in school and what you think about your school. I agree with you that yours is a good school, and these are some of the particular strengths:

- You really enjoy school and this helps you to reach good standards in your work.
- Your behaviour and personal development are exemplary and you get on very well with each other and with adults in the school.
- Adults take good care of you and help you to take care of yourselves.
- The curriculum is good and gives you a range of interesting trips, visits and visitors.
- Teachers help you to improve well by making useful comments when they mark your work.
- The school council helps adults to know what you all think.
- Your headteacher and staff work well together and are constantly finding new ways to make your school even better.

I agree with your teachers' plan about the most important thing to do next:

- Use new and different ways to help you to improve your writing.

You can help by making sure that you follow up teachers' advice when they mark your work.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires. It was very helpful to hear what they think about the school. I wish you all well in the future. Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Helen Hutchings Lead inspector