

Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School, Dartford

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118859
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326913
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Davies

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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	230
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	50
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Davis
Headteacher	Yvonne Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Chatsworth Road Dartford DA1 5AF
Telephone number	01322 224474
Fax number	01322 290667

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

In line with a local trend, the number of pupils attending Holy Trinity continues to fall, although numbers are higher than usual this year in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The majority of pupils are from White British families. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds represents a wide range of ethnicity. A few pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A high proportion of pupils move in and out of the school. This movement is constant and affects all year groups. There have been many changes to staff since the school's last inspection, including senior leadership. The school is led currently by an advisory headteacher, who joined the school in January 2008.

At its last inspection, the school was found to require significant improvement and was given a notice to improve. A monitoring visit in May 2008 found that the school was making good progress in addressing the areas identified for improvement.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The overall effectiveness of Holy Trinity School is now satisfactory. Crucially, the school has secured satisfactory leadership and management and the sound capacity to bring about its own future innovation. The advisory headteacher provides pace and clear direction and the school has maintained a good level of improvement. The detailed scrutiny of assessment information is the source of sharply focused priorities for moving the school on. Staff and governors have worked productively with the local authority to extend their knowledge and expertise. Middle managers are increasingly taking responsibility for improving academic performance and monitoring outcomes. However, not all those in leadership positions are as far ahead in this work as are other colleagues. Parents recognise and praise the school's improvement. They appreciate the wider opportunities to get involved in school life through organising fund raising events, and are particularly pleased that the school has responded to their requests for the introduction of school meals.

From Reception onwards, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Signs of accelerating progress are now evident across the school, as improvements to the curriculum, assessment and teaching take hold. However, new initiatives have not yet had a marked impact on attainment. Standards vary from year to year and are currently below average across English, mathematics and science.

A wider curriculum offers more imagination and relevance than before and has fired pupils' enthusiasm. Its strongest aspect is the wide variety of activities beyond the everyday ones in lessons, often enhanced by links with other schools and facilities locally. Lesson activities now have a greater focus on investigation and problem solving to engage pupils and develop independent learning skills. This approach is especially beneficial in science, where standards have been low, and helped to improve results in last year's national tests at Year 6. At the same time, there is close attention to basic literacy and numeracy skills. This work is enabling older pupils, for instance, to make up for lost ground in earlier learning and ensure they are better prepared for their future education and adult life. Teaching improved over the course of last year in response to robust monitoring and support. It is currently satisfactory overall, and sometimes good, but its quality varies. Inconsistency occurs because staff are not fully confident with the use and management of new strategies, which have yet to become fully embedded in practice.

Pupils' friendliness and confidence illustrate strengths in the school's pastoral care. New arrivals are well supported and relationships among pupils are good, regardless of ethnic background. A firm stance on absence has increased the level of attendance, while close attention to pupils' well-being is reflected in their good understanding of safe practices, the benefits of a well balanced diet and physical exercise.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Attainment on entry to Reception is lower than it was in the past, and below the expected level. Children make satisfactory progress, so that last year's group entered Year 1 with standards that were just below average. The school works hard to gain the personal skills necessary for effective learning. As a result, children are happy and spontaneous, and work together with

much enjoyment. Parents of children in this group wrote with pleasure to say how quickly and confidently their children had settled into school. The school has already extended its induction arrangements so that parents are more closely involved. Welfare arrangements are thorough and children benefit from a secure outside space and good supervision. They understand routines and follow them sensibly.

Leadership of the EYFS is satisfactory. Revised planning ensures a full coverage of the EYFS curriculum and a close focus on learning objectives. Children readily select activities for themselves and tackle them with good levels of concentration. However, while these opportunities valuably encourage greater independence, full use is not yet made of their potential for promoting other areas of learning. When given the chance to produce their own ideas, children complete original and individual pieces of work. Nevertheless, such open ended opportunities are still too few.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress beyond the present satisfactory level in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Embed improvements to provision so that teaching is consistently good and better.
- Ensure all leaders and managers take full responsibility for improving academic performance and monitoring outcomes.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Whilst achievement remains satisfactory, the school has worked hard to move things on. Faster progress is already evident, but not yet fast enough to secure a firm and consistent lift in standards. National test results vary each year. Standards are currently below average at Year 2 and Year 6, although predictions for the current Year 6 are for higher results in 2009. To some extent, variations in attainment are accounted for in the many changes to pupils throughout the year, but they are also influenced by inconsistencies in the quality of provision and disruption caused by changes to staff.

Improvements to assessment now mean that the school has a firm knowledge of pupils' performance and allows it to tackle particular areas of weakness within English, mathematics and science. Priorities for improvement currently lie with writing and mathematics, but attention to science has already increased test results in this subject. Close checks on data ensure that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, the few learning to speak English for the first time, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all make similar rates of progress to others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

While still satisfactory overall, there have been some important improvements to pupils' personal development. Pupils' enjoyment of school, for example, has grown. Pupils think lessons are fun, especially the practical work in science, and name writing and mathematics among their favourite subjects. They also enjoy their friendships. They say that there is only occasional

bullying and are confident that, when this happens, it is dealt with well. They, therefore, feel safe and confident at school. They are proud to win awards for punctuality and good attendance. Given such positive attitudes, it is also not surprising that attendance has risen to above average levels this year.

Behaviour is satisfactory. At playtimes, pupils behave sensibly and safely, and older pupils show responsibility towards others by acting as 'play leaders', helping anyone that needs some support. Lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour, even where some pupils find the demands of school life more difficult than others. Nevertheless, lessons are often noisy. In many cases, this noise is caused by the excitement of practical activity but, when it happens, pupils lose their concentration and progress slows.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning improved last year in response to rigorous monitoring and support. The introduction of new strategies, intended to promote independent learning and generate greater levels of challenge, have stimulated pupils' interest, but staff are not yet wholly confident with their use. Consequently, although there is good teaching and new approaches are increasingly making a difference, the overall quality of teaching is still inconsistent.

Lessons have clear learning objectives and practical activity is now a common feature. Good relationships between staff and pupils also encourage and promote confidence and self-esteem. Where pace is brisk, pupils are well motivated and there is a good working atmosphere. In some cases, levels of concentration and engagement are high. Pupils enjoy practical and investigational work and the chance to work with each other. When they are kept closely on task during such activities, progress is good. Too often, though, excitement turns to chatter and noise, which remains unchecked. Sometimes, too much direct teaching or missed opportunities to challenge pupils to the full also constrain progress. Occasionally, too little challenge means that pupils do not make the progress they should.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Changes to the curriculum have brought more imagination and relevance to pupils' learning. Close links with other schools widen pupils' experience through, for example, specialist teaching and competitive sport. Opportunities to sing in public, learn another language, and work with a Ghanaian artist are just some other features of the school's extended curriculum. Its Christian foundation is celebrated in its links with local churches, while there are also some valuable opportunities to increase pupils' knowledge of cultures beyond their own, enhanced by their contribution to international charities. All these experiences help to develop pupils' sense of community within, and beyond, their school.

Improvements to planning for English have secured a wide range of writing opportunities. Pupils are motivated by good quality literature, although a few parents comment that they would like more books to come home. The use of problem solving activities is increasing pupils' mathematical skill and science work is now rooted in practical investigation. The move to increase independent learning skills is gathering pace, but still has further to go. Improvements

to resources have included training for teaching assistants, so that they provide consistently effective support during lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This aspect of the school's work is another developing area, but with already established strengths in pastoral support. For example, arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure are thorough. 'Buddying' arrangements ease new pupils into the school's daily life and, where necessary, provide links with families who speak the same language. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is enhanced by good contact with outside agencies.

Senior staff ensure that pupils' progress is monitored closely. These checks enable the school to readjust targets, pinpoint the needs of new arrivals, and identify those who need extra support. Staff beyond senior level have become increasingly involved in assessment activities, and their confidence with judging pupils' attainment is growing. Pupils know their learning targets, but do not yet receive regular feedback on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have developed to the extent that the school now acts independently to bring about improvement. There is a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and a firm focus on academic performance, driven resolutely by the advisory headteacher. The impact of initiatives so far has already enhanced pupils' response and started to accelerate the rate of progress, although inconsistencies in the quality of provision have yet to be resolved.

Senior staff have monitored the school's performance closely. At the same time, they have developed the skills of other leaders so that those at middle management level can take over this role in relation to their areas of responsibility. In some cases, these skills are well developed, while other leaders have further to go before they can play a full part in bringing about improvement. Governors are well informed about the school's work, and training has enhanced their capacity for acting as the school's critical friend. They continue to work in close partnership with the local authority to secure permanent staff to senior leadership positions.

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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?	3
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	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

24 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holy Trinity CofE Primary School, Dartford DA1 5AF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so friendly and helpful while we were with you. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found out. When your school was inspected last time, it needed to make some very important improvements. Your staff and governors have worked hard to make things better and this time we found that the school is now doing a satisfactory job. Some of your parents wrote to say how much the school had improved, and you are more enthusiastic about your lessons too! You are all making satisfactory progress and, importantly, progress is now beginning to get faster.

Here are some other important things about you and your school

- From Reception onwards you are all happy, friendly and confident.
- The school takes good care of you and makes sure that those of you who are new to the school settle in quickly.
- Attendance is now much better and you are proud to receive awards for good attendance and punctuality.
- Your progress is checked very carefully, although you would benefit from more information about how to make your work even better.
- Good links with other schools give you lots of extra things to do, like singing in a choir and taking part in sporting activities.
- You like practical activity and investigations, but too often, when your excitement makes you noisy, you lose concentration.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better

- Make sure that you make faster progress than you do now in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Settle in all the many improvements that the school has made so that teaching is always good or better.
- Ensure that all the staff who have responsibilities for improving the school are fully involved in making things better and checking how well the school is doing.

We hope you all do your very best at all times and we wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully Patricia Davies Lead inspector