

Culverstone Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118263
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339175
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dawn Bramer
Headteacher	Ruth Doughty
Date of previous school inspection	14 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors spent two thirds of the time looking at learning. They observed nine lessons and saw six teachers. Meetings were held with a variety of staff, the chair and vice chair of governors and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, such as the strategic plan, safeguarding information, assessment data and records of school monitoring and evaluation. Inspectors analysed 36 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers and those returned by pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of what the school is doing to improve pupils' skills in English, especially their writing
- how successfully the school is using its assessment procedures to identify and target pupils' progress
- the effectiveness of the restructured leadership and management at all levels in raising pupils' attainment.

Information about the school

Culverstone Green is a one-form-entry village school with mixed-age classes. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a small number are from Traveller backgrounds. The number of pupils who joined or left the school other than at the usual times was above that normally found in Year 6 last year. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than found nationally. Such needs mainly feature speech, language and communication learning difficulties. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in a discrete Reception class. Among others, the school holds the Healthy School and Activemark awards. Pupils may join a breakfast club run by the school which parents pay for and an after-school club which is open to the wider community. This after-school club is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Culverstone Green provides a good education. Significant strengths are in the excellent level of care, support and guidance it provides for pupils, in the outstanding partnerships with others and engagement with parents. One parent reflected the views of many by saying, 'it is welcoming and friendly and the welfare of the children is paramount, they thoroughly enjoy school'. Pupils feel very safe and secure and have confidence in the adults around them. Everyone is valued; relationships between adults and children are warm and reflect pupils' excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and make good progress to reach above average levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Progress is good in English, mathematics and science and especially so in writing. This is because pupils are actively encouraged to participate in their learning with rich opportunities for speaking and listening before writing. The presentation and accuracy of their work is often of a high standard. They write freely and transfer their literacy skills successfully to other subjects. A great deal has been done to provide pupils with a vibrant and imaginative curriculum. However, more relevant opportunities for developing pupils' problem-solving and investigational skills in their mathematical and science-based work are not as advanced.

In lessons, teachers plan effectively to meet the wide range of needs in their classes and use targets and marking well to help pupils to understand what they are learning and to recognise if they have been successful. Pupils confirm that they are clear about how to improve their work. Pupils enjoy school. One wrote, 'I enjoy school more than a balloon needs air'. Specialist teaching in sports contributes to pupils' enjoyment and they have an excellent understanding of the importance of leading healthy lives through 'no crisp days' and fruit-based 'tangy Tuesdays'. Pupils love being school councillors, house captains and buddies. They contribute well to the local and wider communities, support a school in Kenya, share video conferences with local schools and fundraise. The school planning to promote community cohesion is at an early stage of development in relation to developing pupils' understanding of living in a diverse United Kingdom.

The charismatic leadership of the headteacher is key to the school's success and recent staff and governor restructuring has strengthened leadership further. The school's self-evaluation procedures are accurate. Leadership and governors have a clear view of the school's strengths and have secured the support of all in tackling weaknesses. Improvements in teaching and the curriculum and pupils' accelerated progress especially in writing, together with recognition that there is more to do, confirm the school has a good capacity to further improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help pupils to make even better progress in mathematics and science by:
 - giving them extensive opportunities to develop their problem-solving and investigational skills in their mathematical and science-based work and throughout the curriculum.
- Develop the school's strategy for community cohesion beyond the local area so that pupils have a good understanding of living in a diverse society in the United Kingdom today by:
 - developing contacts with schools in the United Kingdom
 - extending the video conferencing with schools locally to those within a contrasting environment in the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy learning, eagerly respond to challenges and are keen to discuss their ideas. They work very well together and independently. In a Year 6 English lesson, for example, pupils worked exceptionally well together and put Macbeth on trial for murder. In roles as judge and barristers alike, gowned and wigged, they defended and prosecuted Macbeth while reporters filmed and recorded the proceedings. This fired their imagination and provided them with plenty of ideas for their writing. Pupils' investigational and problem-solving skills in mathematics and science are not as well developed. Progress was good in all lessons seen and work in pupils' books demonstrated that knowledge and understanding is developed at a good pace over time. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support in class and in withdrawal sessions so that they achieve well in relation to their starting points. All are thoroughly engaged with their learning and their progress is accelerating. Pupils learn about democracy, fair trade and banking and use information and communication technology with confidence. Large numbers enjoy clubs from basketball to gardening. Play leaders ensure younger ones have fun at playtimes; Year 6 buddies help Reception children and take turns to help in the school office.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The excellent partnerships with support agencies and local schools most effectively support pupils' emotional and academic needs and enrich provision to an outstanding level. Successful work with Traveller children and their families has improved their attendance and progress. Learning mentors and counselling have been particularly effective in supporting vulnerable pupils and their families. A number of parents and carers commented on how well their children, who have a range of needs, had been supported. A good team of teaching assistants work in an effective partnership with teachers so that such pupils make as much progress as their peers. Gifted and talented pupils are encouraged to shine, whether through sports trials or inter-school quizzes. School clubs are well attended and provide good quality care.

The curriculum is creative and imaginative and is enriched through clubs, visits and visitors. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning. Sport has a high profile and provides pupils with additional opportunities to take part in a range of activities. Pupils said how much they enjoyed multicultural week when they studied cultural differences in Peru and Fiji. Curriculum planning continues to be refined to ensure more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigational and problem-solving skills in science and mathematics. Skilful teaching assistants and a good range of programmes support pupils' basic skills well. These, together with improving teaching, are why pupils' progress is accelerating but it is not yet outstanding. Lesson planning clearly identifies activities for all abilities within the class, including the more-able. Teachers use questioning well to gain pupils' views and ideas and create an exciting and positive learning environment.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by all the staff, has been especially effective in creating a lively and stimulating environment for learning and in promoting excellent levels of care and support for pupils. Robust child protection and safeguarding arrangements ensure pupil safety. The school's commitment to equal opportunities and eradicating discrimination is seen in the way it tracks the progress of different groups of pupils and has helped to remove any obstacles to their learning. As a result, there is no evidence of significant underachievement in any group of pupils. Staff restructuring has strengthened the capacity of leadership at all levels and is the driving force behind improvement. School planning shows clear priorities linked to the Every Child Matters guidelines and is well focused on raising pupil attainment. Governors and leadership teams effectively monitor the impact of planning and challenging targets are set. Senior leaders offer role models of high-quality practice and embed high expectations of all staff. Teaching and learning is analysed, monitored and evaluated carefully which has led to improved teaching and pupils' rising attainment. Governors, are supportive, and challenge leaders effectively on areas of weakness and play their role in securing further improvement. The school has done much to promote community cohesion in the locality and globally but its impact at the national level is more limited.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children join Reception with wide-ranging skills and understanding and, depending on the cohort, this can often be below levels typical for their age. They quickly settle into routines, gain confidence and are eager learners. By the time they enter Year 1, they are working at levels that are average and sometimes above. They are very well cared for and make good progress in all areas of their learning because teachers provide them with many opportunities to develop their basic skills and to explore the world around them. There is a strong emphasis on the development of children's social skills and they learn to play together happily and take turns as well as working independently. There is a good balance of activities led by the adults and those that children choose for themselves. The outdoor learning area is used well although there is scope for further development of this to help children build on their physical skills, knowledge and understanding. Boys' progress in aspects of communication, language and literacy lag behind that of girls and the school is tackling this effectively. Planning is thorough, themes exciting and boy-friendly; for example, children had great fun creating space suits for astronaut teddy to travel in the life-sized rocket. Lots of excitement, talk, creativity and writing emerged from this, including eating space biscuits. Excellent opportunities for parents to support children's learning exist. Close links with the pre-school, such as shared games sessions, ensure a smooth transition. Staff assess progress carefully and use this information to plan for the next steps in learning. Good leadership and management ensure staff work very well together as a team.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a good response to the questionnaire and the large majority were very supportive of all that the school does. The comments confirmed how happy they were with their child's overall experiences. A number praised the support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and others particularly praised the headteacher and teaching staff for their dedication and support. Inspection evidence

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supports these positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Culverstone Green School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 138 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	75	8	22	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	72	9	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	64	12	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	24	67	11	31	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	67	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	61	13	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	69	10	28	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	47	14	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	56	15	42	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	47	17	47	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	58	12	33	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	64	10	28	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	69	10	28	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Culverstone Green Primary School, Gravesend, DA13 0RF

On behalf of the inspection team I am writing to thank you all for being so welcoming and friendly when we visited your school recently. We agree with you that yours is a good school.

Everyone in the school cares about you and looks after you so brilliantly; this helps you to feel safe and happy. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and how well you get on with each other. We found that you worked hard in lessons. You also enjoy all the responsibilities you have. Well done!

You told us teachers make lessons fun and interesting and make sure that the work you do is just at the right level for you. This means that your progress is good and in writing especially is getting better. By the time you leave you are doing as well as most pupils in other schools and many of you are doing even better. We think you could do even better in mathematics and science if you had more opportunities to develop your problem-solving and investigational skills. Although you know a lot about the different communities locally and much further afield the school could do more to help you find out about people's beliefs, cultures and traditions in the United Kingdom today.

Your headteacher and all the staff want to make the school even better for you. These are the things we have asked them to do to help with this:

- make sure you have more opportunities to develop your problem-solving and investigational skills in mathematics and science and throughout the curriculum.
- help you to have a better understanding of people living in the United Kingdom today by making links with another school in a different area. You could do this through your video conferencing that you already do with local schools.

You can help too by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning

Lead inspector

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