

East Stour Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118367
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339208
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Marshall
Headteacher	Liz Shears-Warren
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons, observed 15 teachers and held meetings with the headteacher, senior leadership team, teaching staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' exercise books. They checked documents including the school improvement plan, systems for tracking the pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation and school policies. They also analysed information from the 91 questionnaires from parent and carers, in addition to those received from staff and pupils

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

- the accuracy of the school's view of its own strengths and weaknesses in order to bring about improvements effectively
- whether the quality of teaching and learning is good enough to bring about sustained improvement in academic outcomes
- if the leadership and management of teaching and learning has sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and assessment
- what leaders are doing to ensure that progress accelerates for all groups of learners
- the quality of the curriculum and of the care, guidance and support pupils receive.

Information about the school

East Stour is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in both Nursery and Reception classes. The school runs a breakfast club. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds but are predominantly White British, with the remainder coming from a range of heritages. Almost a fifth speak English as an additional language. About one in three pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is above average. Their needs are mostly related to emotional and social difficulties and specific learning needs. A well-above-average percentage of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual time.

The school has gained a number of awards, some of which demonstrate a commitment to developing healthy lifestyles, for example, the Healthy School award and Activemark.

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

East Stour Primary is a good and rapidly improving school. One parent wrote, 'My daughter has enjoyed her years at East Stour. She has developed and matured, has been encouraged and praised and the staff have enabled her to flourish.' This echoed the views of many other parents and carers.

Senior leaders, together with phase and subject leaders, are very effective in embedding commitment to school improvement among all members of staff. This is because their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and priorities are clearly identified. The key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed fully because the school has put into place a good range of strategies to improve performance. More effective systems are now in place to monitor the work of the school. As a result, gains have been made in the quality of teaching and learning, the use of assessment data and the relevance of the curriculum. These developments have resulted in improvements in national test results at the end of Year 6, most recently in 2009, and rising teacher assessments in 2010. From their low starting points, pupils make good progress to achieve standards that are broadly average. The school is still continuing its drive for improvement in writing, and an increase in the proportion of pupils who reach the higher levels of performance. The currently good teaching is significantly contributing to this raising of achievement. Teachers' planning and the impact of curriculum innovation now ensure work is highly appropriate for each individual pupil. This has had a marked impact on raising attainment in mathematics in particular. The school's own data indicate pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets. This is clear evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further.

Children come into the Early Years Foundation Stage and receive a particularly good start to their education. Parents are very pleased and praise the Nursery, quite rightly, for its work. They say that their children settle in well and that staff are caring and supportive. The good work started in the Nursery continues into Reception, where progress is good and children develop their skills and confidence effectively. Although parents are generally happy, there is evidence to suggest that they would like to be better informed about some aspects of the school's work, particularly how to help support their children at home. A small minority of parents also felt that the school does not manage poor behaviour effectively. Inspection evidence does not support this view.

The good care, guidance and support the school offers ensures that vulnerable pupils are supported well in a caring, stimulating learning environment. Safeguarding requirements are met well. Although the rate of pupil attendance has also improved, a few parents still do not ensure regular attendance and take their children on extended holidays in term time. This, alongside pupils' currently satisfactory basic skills and their

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sound ability to apply these, means that pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education is not always as good as it could be. The school is already aware of this and has put into place effective strategies that are beginning to show positive signs of impact.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' workplace skills and the preparation for their next stage of education by
 - raising levels of basic skills and pupils' ability to apply these in English and mathematics
 - liaising more closely with a small minority of parents to encourage regular attendance and to discourage holidays in term time.
- Increase the effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers by:
 - improving mechanisms for helping parents to support their children's learning
 - ensuring that parents understand more about their children's life in school

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The large majority of pupils enjoy school and they behave well. Their attitudes to learning are good, which contributes well towards the good progress they make in lessons. Teachers make learning fun and pupils show their appreciation by working well together in pairs and groups. In an effective science lesson where pupils made good progress, they visited a 'crime scene', authentically created by the teacher, which introduced a number of themed investigations for pupils. Initially they set out to learn about the different properties of materials, but on the way they decided 'who dunnit!' In an outstanding mathematics lesson, pupils played quick-fire games to practice multiplication and division skills. Observations by inspectors and scrutiny of exercise books show that teachers' written and oral feedback to pupils has a marked effect on improving pupil outcomes. Pupils know their targets, understand them and strive to reach the next level of attainment. All these factors contribute well to improving attainment and progress. Pupils with special educational needs make similar levels of progress to their classmates. Although attendance and the level of basic skills have improved, the school realises there is more to do to enable pupils to apply them better to prepare for the next stage in their learning.

Most pupils say they feel very safe in school and know they can approach adults confidently with any situations and feel happy that any problems will be sorted out. Pupils like the 'chill club', which provides a safe environment for those pupils who need it at lunchtime. They very much enjoy taking on responsibility as school councillors and buddies. One proudly said, 'Buddies help children who feel sad or left out.' Pupils develop a good understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The links the school has developed with another school in Uganda has been of particular benefit. Pupils speak knowledgeably about how to keep fit and eat healthily. They understand

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about eating in moderation, and say it is good to eat fruit but chocolate too.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved greatly since the time of the last inspection and is having a marked impact on the quality of learning and progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures their teaching is confident and their facts accurate. In a good French lesson, pupils sang in French and were able to translate many simple French words and sentences. The teacher's good knowledge ensures good pronunciation and clear modelling of the French language

Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, good rapport and teamwork between the class teacher and the teaching assistant ensured that support and challenge were provided whenever appropriate. No pupil was left struggling or unchallenged. Effective curricular innovation in mathematics facilitates a good match of work to need. Putting pupils into appropriate sets with those of similar ability across year groups ensures teaching is finely tuned to each individual pupil's level, and promotes consistently good progress. Another strength

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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of the curriculum is the way teachers link subjects together to make them more interesting and meaningful. For example, in Year 2, pupils undertook a scientific investigation about mini-beasts. Their findings were represented through extended writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of themed events such as 'Aspire Week' and 'Anti bullying week', together with a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs such as gardening, cookery and dance.

A significant strength of the good care, guidance and support is the effective teamwork that ensures that vulnerable pupils and their families are quickly identified so that they receive the support they need promptly. There is good evidence to show the impact of the good work undertaken with agencies beyond the school on the progress of vulnerable pupils. The inclusion team ensures that beneficial links are made between the various agencies to maximise support.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have put into place a good range of strategies to improve performance and their actions have been evaluated for impact and modified. As a result, pupils' progress is good and attainment has risen. Phase and subject leaders have also made a good contribution to the evident improvement. They are involved well in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas. Highly effective teamwork has ensured a shared vision of improvement amongst the staff as a whole. Planning for improvement is thorough and focuses well on the main priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The school's procedures to safeguard those in its care are good and sit at the heart of its work.

The governors are effective in challenging and supporting the school in its work and play a full part in strategic and financial planning. They promote community cohesion well in partnership with school leaders. To this end a detailed analysis of the socio economic, religious and ethnic characteristics of the local area has been conducted and evaluated. The school has also engaged communities at the global level but has yet to do this so effectively within the national community. They have also formed good partnership links with other local schools and outside agencies that have a good impact on the well being of pupils. The school makes absolutely sure that pupils from different groups with a variety of learning needs are given every chance to succeed in East Stour. There is no

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discrimination among any pupils and the school is ever watchful that this remains the case. The school recognises that links with parents are not effective enough. More work is necessary to ensure that parents are fully aware of how they can make a more positive contribution to their children's learning.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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 make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage when the exceptionally low starting points of many are taken into account. Children's progress is effectively tracked using planned and on-going observations. This information is collated well and gives teachers a clear overview of how well children are doing. Children are encouraged to explore, investigate and develop their learning across all areas. The outside area is particularly inviting and engages children well. Despite inclement weather during the inspection, children were keen to play outside because of the stimulating environment. They learn to work independently and to cooperate with others. They learn to appreciate diversity and to respect others, behaving exceptionally well. When they leave the Nursery they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The immaturity of some children in Reception means that their levels of concentration are low for their age. However, because of effective support and good questioning which contributes well to language development, children make good progress in their learning. Topics are selected and planning for them takes account of children's needs and interests in order to move learning and development on. Teachers prepare interesting and appealing activities. During the inspection, children learnt about the importance of good hygiene and about safety when using ovens and utensils while

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making butterfly cakes.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed. The phase leader and the nursery manager are dedicated and enthusiastic. They work well together for a common purpose. Children who may need extra help are identified and effective links with external agencies enable them to get the extra help they need. Although parents do support the school, by helping with reading and becoming involved in cultural events, the school would like to improve the day-to-day support that parents give their children with their learning.

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

The relatively small number of parents who returned the questionnaires were very positive about the school and the level of disagreement with any of the questions on the questionnaires was low. Relatively few parents made additional comments. Some spoke highly of the particularly good start their children receive in the Nursery. Some spoke very positively about the work of the headteacher. Some parents also felt that unacceptable behaviour was not dealt with effectively. Inspectors only found good behaviour evident during the inspection. In addition, there was good evidence to support good behaviour management. A few parents also felt that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns and that they are not helped to support their child's learning at home. This was brought to the attention of the school by inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at East Stour Primary 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 365 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	53	39	43	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	49	44	48	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	29	53	58	11	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	41	45	49	8	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	45	46	51	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	42	41	45	10	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	41	49	54	1	1	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)	33	36	48	53	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	34	51	56	6	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	26	49	54	13	14	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	29	51	56	12	13	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	30	50	55	8	9	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	45	43	47	5	5	2	2

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



28 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of East Stour Primary School, Earlsworth Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 0DW

Thank you very much for making our recent visit to your school so enjoyable and thank you especially to those of you who took the time to speak to us during lunchtime and in classes. We liked the way you were polite and courteous, and we found your behaviour to be good. You are a credit to your school: well done! You know how to stay healthy and safe and take on a number of responsibilities that are very positive for your school. Some of you are school councillors; others act as 'buddies' to those children who are sad or lonely. This is highly commendable; again, well done for this! The school cares for you very well and makes sure that you are kept safe.

We think your school is good and getting better. Your teachers do a good job and spend time thinking carefully about how to make your lessons interesting and different. I enjoyed examining the crime scene along with you in science. Fancy finding a dead body in a school! Whatever next! Teaching is good in your school most of the time and is still improving. This is a credit to your headteacher and her team of leaders.

Mathematics has improved a lot because of the way you are taught in groups. Writing has also improved. You now reach the levels of most children of your age in these subjects. You make good progress in your lessons

Even in a good school like yours there is work to be done. Your parents are happy with the school but would like to be involved more in its work. Some of you do not attend as often as you could and your parents take you away for extended holidays in term time. We have asked the school to ensure that:

- you are better prepared for your next stage of education by improving your mathematics and English even
- more and by raising the levels of attendance. You can help by always working hard in class and attending school whenever possible
- they help your parents to support your learning at home and tell them more about what happens in your school day to day

We wish you every success at East Stour

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead inspector

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