

Aylesham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118563
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339243
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Missin

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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Leon King
Headteacher	Mrs Abigail Birch
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006
School address	Attlee Avenue Aylesham Canterbury CT3 3BS
Telephone number	01304 840392
Fax number	01304 843109
Email address	headteacher@aylesham.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including 81 responses to parental questionnaires.

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

- the standards reached and progress made, especially by pupils in Year 6
- the impact of school leaders on securing school improvement
- the school's care and welfare provision
- the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Aylesham Primary School is smaller than most similar schools. The number on roll is decreasing as the birth rate falls locally. The number of classes has decreased from twelve to seven in the last three years. Nearly a third of pupils have special educational needs; this is much higher than average. The most common aspects of need are behavioural, emotional and social needs, and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is similar to the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British ethnic backgrounds. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2008 and the deputy headteacher in January 2009. Children in The Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception and a Nursery class. A Children's Centre has recently been opened on the school's site and it will be inspected separately.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to raising standards and accelerating the progress that pupils make, especially in Year 6.

This caring school has some strengths, especially in the way in which all pupils are looked after well and with great care and sensitivity. Procedures to meet the needs of pupils who are vulnerable, distressed or who have specific difficulties are particularly well managed and organised. This strength is appreciated by most parents. The school's main weakness is that the response to the trend of declining standards in Year 6 dating from 2006 has not been tackled with sufficient rigour and has not been reversed quickly enough.

Recently, standards in Year 2 have varied, but in 2009 standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below average. Since 2006, standards in Year 6 have been below average each year and in 2009 standards in English, mathematics and science were exceptionally low. However, there are signs that the initiatives introduced since the appointment of the headteacher are leading to rising standards in parts of the school. There is a clear focus in the school improvement plan on the priority of raising standards and accelerating progress, improving teaching and developing assessment and tracking systems. These are beginning to show improvements. Standards in Year 1 are beginning to rise as the good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps to accelerate children's learning in their first years at school. Standards in Year 2 are rising quickly as a result of some effective and inspirational teaching. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

The quality of teaching is improving, but is too variable. In the best lessons, pupils learn at a good pace because teachers provide work which challenges pupils of all abilities and shows them clearly how to improve. Where teaching is less effective, teachers' expectations of pupils' achievements are not high enough. Pupils are not involved sufficiently in their learning, for example through assessing their work and devising targets to help them improve. There has been insufficient focus by school leaders on checking the impact of the quality of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. The curriculum is satisfactory, but there has been insufficient reference to providing interesting and challenging activities which add to pupils' enjoyment of, and commitment to, their learning across different subjects. Attendance rates are average

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and most pupils come to school promptly each morning. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Provision impacts well on pupils' social and moral development. Their spiritual development is satisfactory, but they have insufficient appreciation of the cultures and lifestyles of different British ethnic groups. All leaders have a clear and realistic view of the effectiveness of the school's work. Leadership and management roles and responsibilities have recently been redefined and are now clear and well understood. The impact of some of the new initiatives is starting to be felt. Procedures have been strengthened by the implementation of a local authority-supported 'Ensuring Success' programme. A weakness is that for some time initiatives have not made sufficient impact in redressing the underachievement in Year 6. The continuing low standards in Year 6 mean that value for money is inadequate. Nevertheless, the drive, determination and skill of school leaders and the evident signs of recovery in important areas mean that the school has a satisfactory capacity for further and sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and accelerate the progress that pupils make, especially in Year 6 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the pace and the quality of pupils' work
 - monitoring teaching rigorously to focus more clearly on the pace of pupils' learning
 - improving the overall quality of teaching so that at least 80% is good or better by July 2010
 - involving pupils more in assessing their own work and in devising targets which will show them more clearly how to improve
 - ensuring that the revised curriculum increases pupils' enjoyment of, and commitment to, their learning, and emphasises links between subjects more clearly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

There are variations in the quality of pupils' learning across the school. Where teaching is good or outstanding, pupils learn quickly and effectively. In a very effective numeracy lesson in Year 2, the teacher used very challenging questions. As a result, pupils demonstrated high levels of enjoyment and they worked keenly together with minimal adult supervision. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities show good levels of concentration and commitment to their work. They make good progress because adults provide good support and cleverly help them to get the most out of lessons with sensitive encouragement and prompting. This was seen during the inspection in a Year 5 writing activity where pupils were given good support. However, in some lessons the pace of learning drops, particularly at the beginning or when pupils change activities. When this happens, too many pupils are not fully engaged in the

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lesson and do not listen attentively for long enough. Pupils' achievement and the progress they make are satisfactory. Currently, pupils are making the best progress in Years 1 and 2 where the school is building successfully on the good start that children get in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Progress is accelerated in Year 2 where the quality of teaching is the strongest. Progress is good in Year 5 where the standards pupils are reaching are being raised. Progress in Year 6 is weak because the quality of teaching is not consistently strong enough to overcome significant underachievement in the past.

Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory and they have a good appreciation of what it means to be safe in school, including the dangers of using the internet. Their good awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles is reflected in their enthusiasm to participate in physical education lessons and after school clubs. They have a good appreciation of being part of the school community and participate well in the wider community, such as taking part in the village carnival and visiting the nearby senior citizens' home.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

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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In lessons where teaching is good, teachers plan activities which interest and challenge pupils well. During the inspection, a literacy lesson in Year 2 where the teacher left an empty box on her chair as the pupils came in, illustrated clearly how an excellent introduction quickly enthused pupils to question creatively what had happened to 'Molely Mole'. Teachers plan effectively and make reference to work for pupils of different abilities in their class. The support provided by teachers and their assistants for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Where teaching is less effective, pupils are sometimes hesitant about sharing their ideas in class, and opportunities to enable them to talk together in pairs or smaller groups are not taken. Assessment information is used satisfactorily to support pupils' learning but it is used well to plan for the small steps required for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' learning targets are clearly displayed in their classes and they say that they are helping them to improve. However, some of these processes are very recent and have not had time to impact on raising standards.

The curriculum is based on topics and themes which meet pupils' needs satisfactorily, but there is insufficient linking of different subjects or planned emphasis on how to make provision more relevant, interesting and enjoyable for the pupils. The school is beginning to introduce a new curriculum framework based on promoting basic skills but also including wider experiences in order to address these weaknesses. The emphasis provided on pupils' personal development is good. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and clubs which are popular and well attended.

The good support for pupils' well-being and welfare is a significant strength of the school. The good pastoral care supports all pupils' learning well, and provides a caring environment where pupils feel safe and secure. The way that pupils who are vulnerable or in need are identified, monitored and supported is outstanding. Specialist staff have a significant impact because they are very knowledgeable about provision, know pupils and their families well and have excellent connections with the community and other agencies. This has a very positive impact on the pupils' emotional development, self-esteem and their ability to learn and make progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since her appointment, the headteacher has introduced several important initiatives to strengthen the leadership and management of the school. School improvement planning

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is now clearly centred on the priority to raise standards and accelerate progress. There has been a new and effective focus on the analysis and use of assessment information by leaders to set improvement targets. New senior leaders have been appointed and their roles and responsibilities redefined. Leaders at all levels now share the responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and for assessing and recording the progress that pupils make. The impact of these new procedures is beginning to be seen in the rising standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in Years 1 and 2 and in Year 5. However, the lack of decisive action to rectify the trend of falling standards since 2006 and the fact that current initiatives have been too slow to impact on raising standards in Year 6 are significant weaknesses.

Governors support the school well. They help to give it a high profile in the local community and have provided stability and direction during the recent leadership changes. However, their knowledge of assessment data and the challenge given to the school about declining standards have not been sufficiently robust.

The school's relationship with parents and carers supports its care and welfare provision well. The school is fully inclusive in the way it promotes equality and all pupils are looked after and encouraged. Procedures for ensuring that adults are appropriately checked and that the school is a safe and orderly place, are good. The school's positive ethos contributes very strongly to community cohesion locally, and the school is actively seeking ways to strengthen these connections and to extend them to more distant communities through, for example, links with a school in Calais. The school works effectively with other schools and colleges to widen opportunities for pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	4

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. From below average starting points, children make good progress in their learning to reach average standards in most areas of their learning by the end of Reception. Children often start school with poorly developed language and communication skills, and although progress is good, standards in basic reading and writing skills are often still below average for their age. Children make the best progress in developing their personal and physical skills. This is because of the consistent and caring attitude of all adults and the very positive relationships that are quickly established. Provision in the classrooms and in the shared outside area for promoting children's physical development is excellent. This supports the provision for children's physical and social skills very effectively.

Children's behaviour is good and, during the inspection, the way that the youngest children were able to choose an activity and a partner to help them was very impressive. Care and welfare provision is a high priority and is good. Provision is based securely on all the adults' knowledge of the children and the very effective liaison with parents. Planned activities meet the children's needs and interests well. During the inspection, high levels of enjoyment and some effective adult interventions were observed as children were being encouraged to make choices about the activities to follow. Planning is clear and detailed. The Nursery provides a particularly attractive and challenging learning environment where children have good access to resources and learning equipment covering all aspects of the curriculum. Regular and useful assessments are made of children's progress which are used well to plan activities that support and develop their learning.

Good leadership and management have resulted in an effective staff team, although the current leader is acting in a temporary capacity. Teachers have secure day-to-day assessment procedures to check on children's achievement and progress and data are beginning to be used more robustly to monitor overall progress. Children are well prepared for the move to Year 1.

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

Views of parents and carers

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In their responses to the questionnaires, most parents and carers were positive about the school and its impact on their children's learning and well-being. Almost all were happy with their children's experience at school and felt that children enjoyed coming to school. A very large majority agreed that children were safe at school and that children's particular needs were met well. However, a few noted some concerns about behaviour in the school which were shared by inspectors. This reflects the inspection findings. Inspectors did not agree with most parents' view that children were making enough progress or that the quality of teaching was good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aylesham 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 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 176 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	54	31	38	5	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	36	44	44	54	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	17	63	78	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	26	55	68	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	35	50	62	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	27	53	65	4	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	31	53	65	2	2	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)	19	23	52	64	4	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	21	59	73	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	19	51	63	8	10	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	20	57	70	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	25	31	53	65	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	42	45	56	1	1	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.



4th October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aylesham Primary School, Canterbury, CT3 3BS

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to the school recently to see how well you were doing. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and at play. Your school is a very caring one but it has some important weaknesses. This means that the school requires something called 'a notice to improve' and other inspectors will come to check on how quickly your school is improving.

Here are some of the best things about your school:

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a particularly good start when they begin school.
- You are all looked after and cared for very well. The school makes sure that you all have the same opportunities to do things.
- You have a good appreciation of the importance of being safe and leading healthy lifestyles.
- Pupils who have learning difficulties are supported well and they are helped to make good progress towards meeting their learning targets.
- Your school leaders are clear about what needs to be done and work well together as a team to plan for the school's improvement.

To help the school improve more quickly, senior leaders should:

- Focus more clearly on ways to help you improve the standard of your work and the progress you make, especially those of you in Year 6.
- Improve teaching so more of it is good or better so that you all make good progress in your learning.
- Involve you more with your own learning, such as assessing how well you are doing and devising targets to show you how to improve.
- Make sure that the new curriculum provides more interesting, enjoyable and challenging activities across all subjects.

You all need to continue to work hard with your school leaders to make sure that the school continues to get better. Thank you again for your welcome. We wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Paul Missin

Lead inspector

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