

Dover, St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118748
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339288
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Heron
Headteacher	Helen D'Cruz
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 12 lessons involving nine teachers, and held meetings with representative governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, the school's improvement plan, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 82 parent and 30 staff questionnaires were received and analysed, along with 112 from pupils.

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

- ' how well pupils make progress, particularly lower and middle attaining pupils and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- ' the effectiveness of the action taken to improve pupils' attendance and reduce the proportion of persistent absence
- ' how effectively leaders and managers have been in identifying weakness and bringing about improvement, particularly to improve teaching and learning.

Information about the school

The pupils in this average-sized school are from a wide range of backgrounds and many pupils join and leave at very short notice, often as families arrive in Britain. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. More pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who hold a statement of special educational needs are above average, some of whom have complex behavioural, emotional or social needs and/or speech, language and communication difficulties. The headteacher has joined the school since the last inspection. The school runs a breakfast club attended by, on average, 12 pupils. The school has received a number of awards, including Investors in People, Healthy Schools, Eco School and Activemark awards.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

One parent accurately commented, 'The school is diverse culturally and socio-economically, which enriches pupils' life experience', while another reflected on the school's achievement day by day: 'My son regularly comes home excited about the work he is doing in school.' The school has built on its earlier strengths. It is improving well under the positive and inspiring leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, particularly in addressing the different needs of pupils since it was last inspected. The school's Christian character is at the heart of its values and expectations. Assemblies encourage spirituality through reflection and prayer, and give pupils good opportunities to celebrate achievement and think about a wide range of issues. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and its harmonious ethos, and attend well. They are courteous, opening doors and speaking politely. However, the attendance of a small minority of pupils is low for a variety of reasons, including extended holidays during school time for pupils returning to their wider families in other countries. This has a negative impact on their progress and future economic well-being.

Children get off to a sound start when they join the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science, representing satisfactory progress from their starting points. The vast majority of pupils who join the school not speaking English make good progress in acquiring the language skills to join in lessons fully. The school has a good record of supporting pupils with social, behavioural and emotional needs, particularly in removing barriers to their learning so that they make progress in line with their peers. Following a period of teacher turnover, staffing has become more stable and teaching is steadily improving. Teachers are keen to share their expertise with one another, which improves pupils' learning, but the school recognises that there is more to do to increase the proportion of good lessons. The focus on improving pupils' writing is successful, particularly by motivating boys and giving pupils real contexts in which to practise their skills. The school has introduced new approaches to managing pupils' behaviour and, as a result, is successful in reducing exclusions and the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour, but the strategies are not always rigorously applied.

Senior leaders have developed a momentum in driving improvement that demonstrates a good capacity to improve further. Evaluation is accurate and the priorities identified for the future are well focused on areas which will have the greatest impact on pupils' learning and progress. For example, teachers are broadening their expertise in making learning active and engaging for pupils, including refining the match of the work to pupils' abilities and needs, and making sure that pupils respond to the advice given to them about their work. Pupils speak positively about how recent changes have improved

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school life. Governors provide effective support because they have a good understanding of the day-to-day work of the school and frequently challenge its leaders about issues of attainment, attendance and strategy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement the plans to improve the consistency of teaching and pupils' learning and progress by:
 - Improve the attendance of the few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly.
 - refining the work given to groups of pupils to make sure that it challenges them appropriately
 - giving pupils opportunities to improve their work by responding to teachers' feedback
 - increasing the pace of lessons by engaging pupils more actively with practical activities
 - ensuring that behaviour management strategies are applied rigorously.
- ' Improve the attendance of the few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils generally enjoy their lessons and say that teachers and teaching assistants help them when they find work hard. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and the vast majority make the nationally expected progress from their starting points. The pupils who do not reach the nationally expected standards generally have some identified learning needs and/or disabilities, have had their learning disrupted because of movement from school to school, or have arrived from other countries and have made less progress across the curriculum while they learn English. Older pupils in particular know the level of their work, and their targets help them to know what they have to do to improve further. As a result, they make good progress. Pupils generally behave appropriately, though sometimes they chat too much and need prompting to bring them back to their tasks. Pupils make good progress when they are given practical tasks which bring learning alive for them, for example in a Year 6 lesson when they measured the effect of exercise on their pulse rate. They respond well to the opportunities to develop their understanding of healthy and unhealthy foods and many participate regularly in after-school sport, as reflected in the receipt of national awards. Pupils say they feel safe in the school and they are aware of issues of their own safety. They say that any poor behaviour or bullying is dealt with effectively by adults. They know whom they would speak with if upset or hurt. Pupils particularly enjoy taking responsibility and contributing to activities across the school. For example helping in the library, as buddies for younger pupils or interpreting for, and befriending, new arrivals. Pupils also help adults with gardening, which improves the school grounds. The vegetables pupils grow are cooked in school or used to make products for sale at school events. The

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school council are rightly proud of their work. They lead fundraising activities, contribute to interviews for staff and share their views about issues impacting on the local community with members of the town council. Such opportunities make an important contribution to pupils' understanding of democracy and citizenship. Attendance has been low over the past three years. The school has good procedures in place to promote and reward good attendance, and pupils very much enjoy the award of the class attendance bear. As a result, the majority of children attend school regularly, but the small minority of pupils who take unauthorised extended leave have a disproportionate impact on the overall attendance. Work undertaken recently has effectively reduced persistent absence for a few pupils and the school realises that more needs to be done to help the group of families who do still do not subscribe to the school's expectations.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	3
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Staff work well together to share expertise. Subject leaders rightly describe the new creative curriculum as 'work in progress' and staff and pupils are enthused by the project so far. For example, the focus on practising writing skills for real purposes, such

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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as writing to pen pals in other schools, has a positive impact on their attainment. The development is being managed carefully to ensure that all essential subject skills are included in the cross-curricular approach. The curriculum is supported by many visits, including locally to Dover Castle or further afield to Kew Gardens, and by the additional interest of visitors to the school. The residential visit and links with a school in France make a major contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. A significant strength of the school lies in the rich variety of lunchtime and after-school activities, including an astronomy club, karate, cooking and family dance and music.

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was often good, and was always at least satisfactory. Teachers work as a supportive team and strengthen the skills of less experienced colleagues. Teachers often use information and communication technology well to illustrate learning and engage pupils. Planning is undertaken carefully, though sometimes the purpose of the lesson is not sufficiently focused on the precise learning expected of each group in the class. Teachers check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson by using a range of techniques, such as 'thumbs up or down', which helps pupils to assess their own progress towards the learning objective. Marking is regular and helpful but there is limited evidence that this is followed up by requiring pupils to correct their work or consolidate their understanding by practising a skill. Teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour in lessons well so that the behaviour of those who find it more difficult respond to the school's high expectations and do not disrupt the learning of others. Governors indicate that the recently introduced strategy, taking a positive approach to rewarding good behaviour, has a major impact on challenging and dealing with poor behaviour. In a few lessons, teachers are too slow to move to the sanctions which slows the pace of learning.

Staff know pupils very well as individuals and respond proactively to their needs. The school's calm and welcoming environment, made interesting with displays of school events and pupils' work, and the firm and positive approach of adults help vulnerable pupils to feel safe and secure in school. Parents and carers are regularly invited to assemblies to celebrate pupils' achievements. This helps them to keep in touch with their children's experiences in school and to support their learning at home. The school is particularly successful in integrating pupils into the school and the country, providing a good basis for their learning and progress. The breakfast club gives those pupils attending a good social start to the day through taking breakfast and playing games such as table tennis with teachers and support staff.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has very effectively retained the confidence of staff and parents during a time of considerable change, including significant staff changes, a more diverse school population, and an increase in the proportion of pupils with complex behavioural and emotional needs. Staff morale is high and there is tangible excitement about how they are improving pupils' educational experience and their achievement. The school is cohesive and plays an important role in promoting community cohesion locally, for example through its links with the church. Pupils demonstrate an acceptance of a wide range of ethnicity, developed through the integration and celebration of different cultures throughout the curriculum, such as a link with school in Gambia. The school works successfully with families to break down barriers to learning, effectively promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.

Since the headteacher took up her post, she has led staff in carrying out an in-depth evaluation of all areas of school to focus priorities for development. For example, lesson observations and a meticulous analysis of performance data identified that a few middle and lower attaining pupils were not making the expected rate of progress. As a result, staff changed the way teaching assistants support different groups of pupils. Regular pupil progress meetings help teachers to focus their actions and approaches. Consequently, the gap between the achievements of different groups is now closing. Inadequate practice has been challenged successfully, and teaching improved so that the focus is now on developing all teaching to the level of the best. Governors discharge their responsibilities effectively, for example ensuring that the school meets the requirements to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils.

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	2
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

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school with varying starting points but are usually broadly in line with, or below, national expectations for their age. Provision is satisfactory and improving. Most children make at least satisfactory progress and are ready to follow the Year 1 curriculum successfully because they reach the nationally expected levels for the Early Years Foundation Stage. At its best, the curriculum is exciting and teachers make full use of opportunities for learning through play, for example when children uncovered toy coins in the sand and matched them to large pictures of money. The range of activities covers all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, with a good balance between activities directed by an adult and those chosen by children. Adults sometimes miss opportunities for learning because the planning has not been sufficiently clear about what children need to learn from each of the planned activities. Staff manage the constraints of ensuring safety on the staircase to the outdoor classroom to achieve an effective balance of indoor and outdoor learning. The classrooms are stimulating and well organised so that children play and learn independently. Children get on well with one another and have a clear understanding of the routines which help to keep them safe. The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has recently taken up her role and is well supported by a senior leader. This is improving provision rapidly.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the school and its work. A few wrote comments to expand on their views. Some were appreciative of how teachers stimulate their child's interest in learning or the way the school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A small minority expressed concerns about the way the school manages unacceptable behaviour. This has been addressed earlier in the report and inspectors do not agree that behaviour is not managed effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dover, St Mary's Church of England 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 82 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 251 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	50	39	48	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	40	43	52	4	5	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	43	37	45	8	10	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	39	40	49	6	7	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	49	32	39	7	9	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	40	36	44	12	15	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	37	44	54	6	7	2	2
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)	25	30	49	60	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	33	45	55	7	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	36	35	43	18	22	7	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	27	46	56	9	11	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	24	29	42	51	12	15	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	32	39	41	50	6	7	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.



17 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Dover, St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Dover CT16 1QX

□

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We found the information you gave us when you spoke with us very valuable. This letter is to explain to you what we found out.

You clearly enjoy school and get on well together, and help new pupils to settle in quickly. This makes the school a happy place for you to work and play together. You mostly work hard in lessons, but sometimes you chat a bit too much and the teacher has to ask you to stop and get on with your work. Teachers take good care of you and plan topics which are interesting for you. You told us that adults are really helpful when you do not understand your work. You have a good understanding of your targets and the steps you have to take to improve your work further. You enjoy helping around the school, for example as buddies, school councillors or gardening. □

We have judged that yours is a satisfactory school and is improving all the time. Your attainment is average and we have made some suggestions for teachers to help you to do better. We have asked them to make sure that you have more lessons where you have practical activities to get you really involved in your learning and that your tasks are always at the right level. □ We are suggesting that when they mark your work, they give you a chance to follow up their comments immediately. We noticed that sometimes your teachers do not move names onto the behaviour crosses quickly enough, and we think that they should not give you so many chances to do the right thing. We know that you will help by continuing to do your best. A few of you do not attend as well as you could and can help by coming to school more regularly.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings Lead inspector

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