

Wittersham Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118740
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379676
Inspection dates	1–2 March 2012
Lead inspector	George Logan

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	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Collins
Headteacher	Judith Thornton
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

George Logan

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent four and a half hours visiting nine lessons taught by five different members of staff. He held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and with staff and two groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, listened to pupils reading and looked at the school's documentation, which included records of teaching, the main improvement plan, records relating to safeguarding and extracts from the school's tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was also undertaken. The inspector analysed 65 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with 14 questionnaires from staff and 71 from pupils.

Information about the school

Wittersham Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language, with none at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the current floor standard. The school has gained a number of awards in recent years, including the Eco-School Silver Award, the ICT and Active Marks and National Healthy School status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Effective leadership has ensured that pupils’ progress is now good and that standards are rising. It is not outstanding because of pupils’ relatively slower progress in writing and because of one relatively weaker area of the curriculum provided.
- More rapid progress, including in Reception, has already ensured above-average standards at the end of Year 2. This momentum is supporting progressively higher standards in Years 3 to 6, although standards at the end of Year 6 are currently broadly average. Pupils make faster progress in reading than they do in writing.
- Teaching is good, so that pupils are learning increasingly well. Teachers have high expectations and challenge pupils effectively. Teachers’ marking is thorough and gives pupils clear guidance for improving their work. The school deploys staff skills effectively to ensure that pupils develop worthwhile skills in, for example, music and information and communication technology (ICT). Opportunities to develop pupils’ writing skills across the curriculum are not always fully exploited.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils’ personal development are good. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Provision for pupils’ welfare is good and pupils feel very safe. Records indicate that incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Attendance has continued to improve and is now high.
- Good leadership and management, including good governance, ensure that the school has a clear direction and that systems are well embedded. Teaching is led well and staff are committed to sustaining the accelerating pace of learning. The headteacher effectively supports and manages teachers’ performance, so ensuring consistent expectations and good outcomes across the school. The curriculum, including extra-curricular provision, provides a variety of rich, well-developed learning experiences which engage pupils’ interest well. However, it

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does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make full use of opportunities across subject areas to develop writing skills, to ensure that pupils make more rapid and consistent progress in writing and achieve higher standards.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their knowledge and understanding of other communities, cultures and faiths, both within the United Kingdom and globally.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers correctly feel that their children make good progress. Overall achievement has improved and is now good. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is broadly average, although lower in communication and language, particularly writing. Children now make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because teaching is good, assessment is thorough and the curriculum is well planned for all abilities. A brisk pace of learning is effectively sustained in Years 1 and 2. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 has been rising and is now above average.

With better grounding, attainment is rising noticeably from Year 3 up, although there has been insufficient time for higher standards to work their way through to the end of Year 6 and attainment remains broadly average overall. Attainment in reading is slightly above average. The rate of progress pupils make in writing is slower than in reading. Senior leaders have focused on sustaining the improved momentum of learning, supported by higher expectations, new progress targets and a rigorous focus on effective learning. All groups make similarly good progress except that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in Year 6 made erratic progress in 2011. However, the performance of this group was significantly affected by circumstances outside the influence of the school. Other such pupils have, over time and currently, made mostly good progress.

Evidence from lessons indicates that high expectations are critical to the improved progress. In a briskly-paced Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils were working purposefully on mean, mode and median calculations. Pupils' enthusiasm and commitment contributed to their good progress, while the level of challenge was maintained by a series of information and communication technology (ICT) based extension activities. In a Years 3 and 4 mathematics lesson, more-able pupils were working confidently on fraction and decimal equivalents, an activity which provided a

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good level of challenge for this age group. In a Years 3 and 4 literacy lesson on dialogue, staff presented a motivating demonstration of a conversation about a tandem, which engaged pupils' imagination well and motivated them to produce their own inventive scripts.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers, and pupils, feel that teaching is good. Inspection evidence endorses this view, given that much teaching seen during the inspection was indeed good. Tracking data indicate that teaching has become increasingly effective, with pupils now making more rapid progress. While this is most evident at present in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and in Years 1 and 2, it is also crucial to the mostly good progress coming through in Years 3 to 6. Teachers' expectations have risen. Pupils are more challenged by the activities and this is evident, for example, in much higher attainment in Reception, and in the rigour of the written work produced by older pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6. In a well-paced Year 6 literacy lesson, the motivating presentation, the teacher's good subject knowledge and enthusiasm, and good opportunities for practical tasks together ensured that progress and achievement were good. There are, however, missed opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across different subjects. Flexible grouping of pupils, with some discrete year-group teaching, enables individual needs to be closely targeted. Across the school, the teaching of reading is effective. The increased emphasis on phonics, from Reception on, is supported by a good range of activities accurately matched to individual needs. Teachers use available resources well to ensure that there is effective use of ICT to support pupils' learning. Teachers promote pupils' social, moral and spiritual development well. Recent activities in art and design enabled pupils to learn about, reflect upon, and replicate Chinese willow pattern designs.

The implementation of a range of assessment strategies, including self-assessment by pupils and the use of individual targets, has been effective. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and identifies the next steps they need to make in their learning. Staff set high expectations of the organisation, presentation and quality of pupils' written work. The high standard of pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 in particular indicates the success of their efforts. Overall, the curriculum effectively supports the improvement in pupils' core skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and pupils rightly recognise the good quality of behaviour and safety in the school. Close, positive relationships between adults and pupils, and the wide range of extra-curricular and community activities, engage pupils well and underpin the positive community spirit. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school and are highly motivated, engaging communicators and learners. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is, for almost all pupils, at least good. Pupils, and most parents and carers, have few concerns about behaviour. Almost all pupils say that they feel very safe, and virtually all parents and carers feel that their children are safe in school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage behave exceptionally well and

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conduct themselves safely both indoors and in the outdoor area. Pupils have a good understanding of risk, supported by the school's input on road safety and personal safety. Pupils understand, for example, the purpose of the school's efforts to keep them safe when using the internet. There are clear procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. These are effective because there are few recorded incidents and, at most, only isolated pockets of occasionally inappropriate behaviour; these records confirm the good quality of pupils' behaviour over time. The ethos of the school is inclusive, providing for pupils with a wide range of needs. Despite this, there have been no exclusions in recent years. There are no reports of bullying of any type. Good procedures are in place to manage any issues that might arise. Attendance has continued to rise and has, for some time, been high. Pupils are seldom absent and almost always arrive at school punctually.

Leadership and management

In any relatively small school, many responsibilities fall to the headteacher. However, staff are ready to take on additional responsibilities, to work cooperatively and to go the extra mile to improve provision and drive more rapid progress. There is, as a result, a clear, shared vision for improvement, to which all staff, teaching and non-teaching, subscribe. Thus individuals across the team are ready to contribute their specialist skills and enrich pupils' opportunities and experience. Effective professional support and development of teaching and learning have ensured that the proportion of good or better teaching has been high in recent years. Past weaknesses in Early Years Foundation Stage provision have been addressed, so that outcomes are now much higher, providing the springboard for standards to rise further up the school. This is already strongly evident in Key Stage 1. Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum and these strongly engage and motivate pupils. Given the school's record of these improvements over time, its capacity for further improvement is good.

Parents and carers recognise, correctly, that school leaders and staff are effective in supporting pupils' personal development and well-being. School leaders and the governing body are rigorous in ensuring that, on the evidence available, safeguarding arrangements meet all current requirements. Security arrangements around the site, swimming pool and new nature area have all been recently upgraded, and to a high standard. The school actively tackles discrimination and is committed to promoting equality, as demonstrated by the robust tracking system and rigorous data analysis that facilitate close monitoring of pupils' progress and the identification of areas where additional input is needed. This has resulted this year, for example, in the implementation of an intensive reading and phonics programme for Years 5 and 6 pupils, to address identified gaps in phonics and reading skills. Arrangements for the support of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well organised and effectively monitored.

The school, through its extensive extra-curricular and enrichment programme, and its commitment to the individual, is highly effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. While there is some support for pupils' cultural

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development, for example, in the recent exploration of Chinese art, myth and food and in the bi-annual Years 5 and 6 residential visit to France, pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is, overall, more limited. The school recognises the importance of extending this further, given the relative isolation of the school's setting. The curriculum has been significantly enriched in recent terms, offering activities which enhance pupils' basic skills well, providing an effective framework within which to drive standards up. Although the school identifies opportunities for the development of writing through other subjects, it recognises that there is further work to do to sustain the existing momentum of improvement in writing. Pupils are highly motivated by the curriculum. They speak with enthusiasm, for example, of the work they do in science, of recent research on the Victorian period and of their fascination with a recent mock-trial, which built upon a prior visit to a local magistrates' court.

School self-evaluation indicates that school leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths, and of what still needs to be done, and there is a strong impetus for change across the school. The good governing body has appropriate specialist skills to support its work, has a realistic view of its strengths and context and actively and effectively supports the school's work.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



5 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wittersham Church of England Primary School TN30 7EA

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, spending time in lessons and hearing your views. It was clear that you are really proud of your school and enjoy the activities provided. Thank you to those who completed our questionnaire. We found that yours is a good school, which continues to improve. Our main findings are listed below.

- Progress across the school is now good. Although still broadly average by the end of Year 6, standards are rising through the school, year on year.
- Provision in Reception has improved and children make good progress there.
- By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is mostly good. Staff have high expectations of what you can achieve. This is reflected in the high quality of much of your written work, especially in Years 5 and 6. Marking shows you clearly how you can improve your work.
- You enjoy school thoroughly, have really good attitudes to learning and behave well. Attendance has also improved and is now high.
- School leaders and governors are very committed to the school and to the quality of experience it gives you. Partnerships are a strength. The curriculum is imaginatively developed, offering quality experiences in a wide range of subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support and extend your learning.

To help you to do better, we have asked the school to:

- use more effectively the opportunities you have for writing in different subjects, so that you make consistent and rapid progress in writing across the school and attain even higher standards
- develop more opportunities for you to gain experience of other communities and cultures, both globally and nationally.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

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